



Water flowing into the ground where it falls will improve the health of all waterways downstream.



Contaminated water flowing from any part of the watershed—polluted run-off from lawns, streets, parking lots and overloaded sewers—will impair the health of all waterways downstream.

So much of what we do impacts our streams



Saving our Streams

Hickory Creek is still one of the healthier streams in northeastern Illinois. But as the land around it becomes ever more covered with homes and urban developments, the fish and other animals that set it apart from other streams are disappearing.

Every resident can play a role in saving our streams. Start by getting acquainted with the waterways and landscape. Bring this foldout map with you as you travel throughout the watershed and begin to notice where you cross the streams, and even the many ditches that used to be streams.

Build an increased awareness of the range of natural and man-made features that contribute to the water in the streams—and can easily contribute to deterioration of the aquatic habitat.

Learn how green infrastructure landscape features like rain gardens can turn rain water from trouble to treasure, by letting stormwater infiltrate into the ground rather than racing to and polluting our streams. www.cnf.org/repository/Water_booklet_final.pdf Learn how natural lawn care can make your property safer for children and pets, and reduce pollutants in your streams. www.epa.gov/epawaste/conservation/greenscapes/owners.htm

Planning our Future

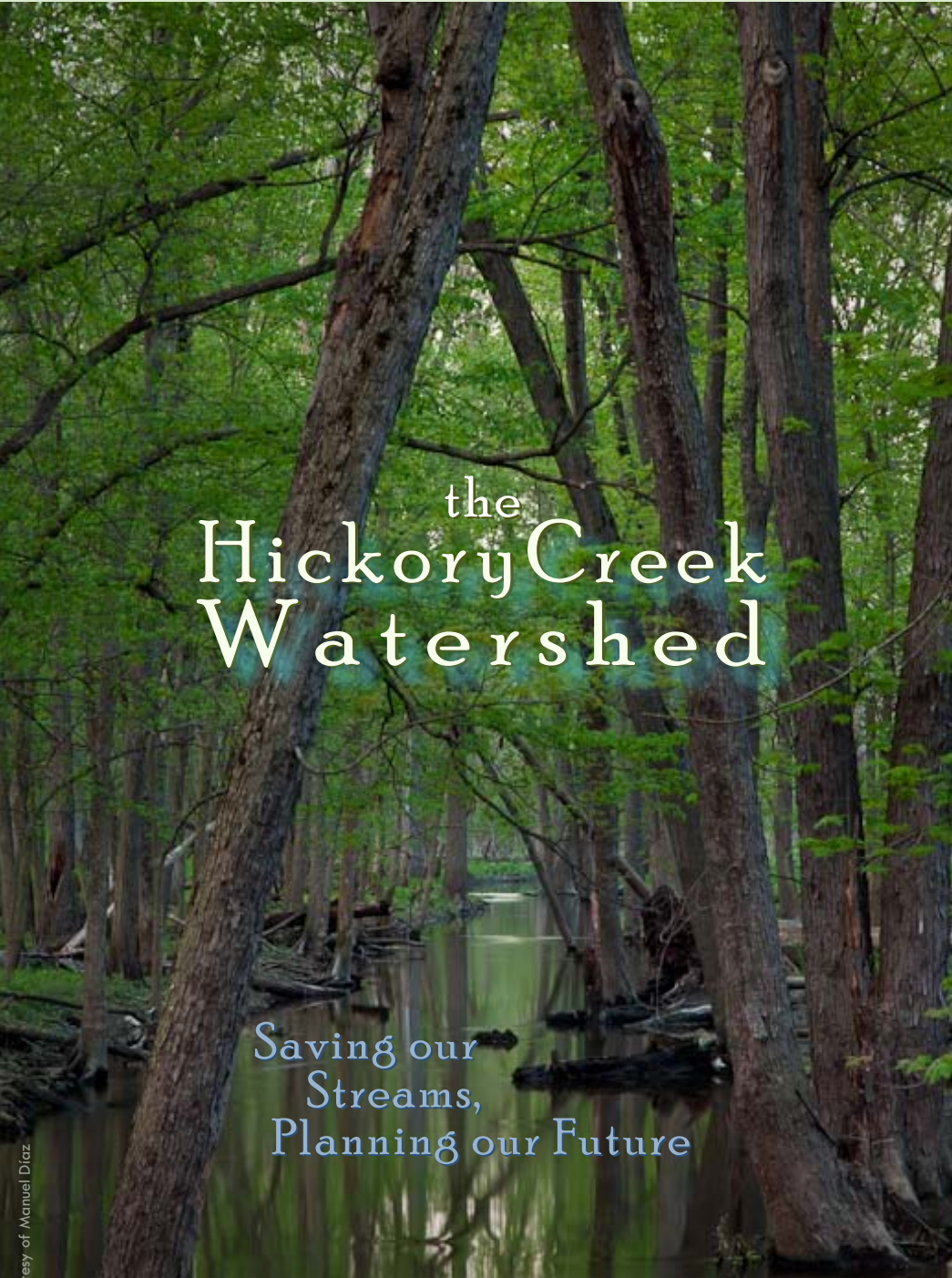
Residents, village leaders and conservation groups formed the Hickory Creek Watershed Protection Group in 2007 to preserve what is special about Hickory Creek, and the unique experience of living near it. In 2009 we received funding from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency through the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning to conduct an 18-month process leading to a Hickory Creek Watershed Plan.

The challenge before the Hickory Creek Watershed Group, and all of us, is to prevent future development from further degrading our streams' water and habitat.

Join us in putting the Watershed Plan together — and putting it to work!

Our website, www.hickorycreekwatershed.org, is being constructed to help you and your neighbors become part of our team. Check it frequently so you can learn more about the watershed and its many sites, join the planning discussion, use the interactive mapping features, find opportunities for action, and connect with others in your neighborhood.

Join the **Facebook Page**—Hickory Creek Watershed—and get all the latest event information, upcoming tours and workshops, photos of Hickory Creek and more!



the Hickory Creek Watershed

Saving our Streams, Planning our Future

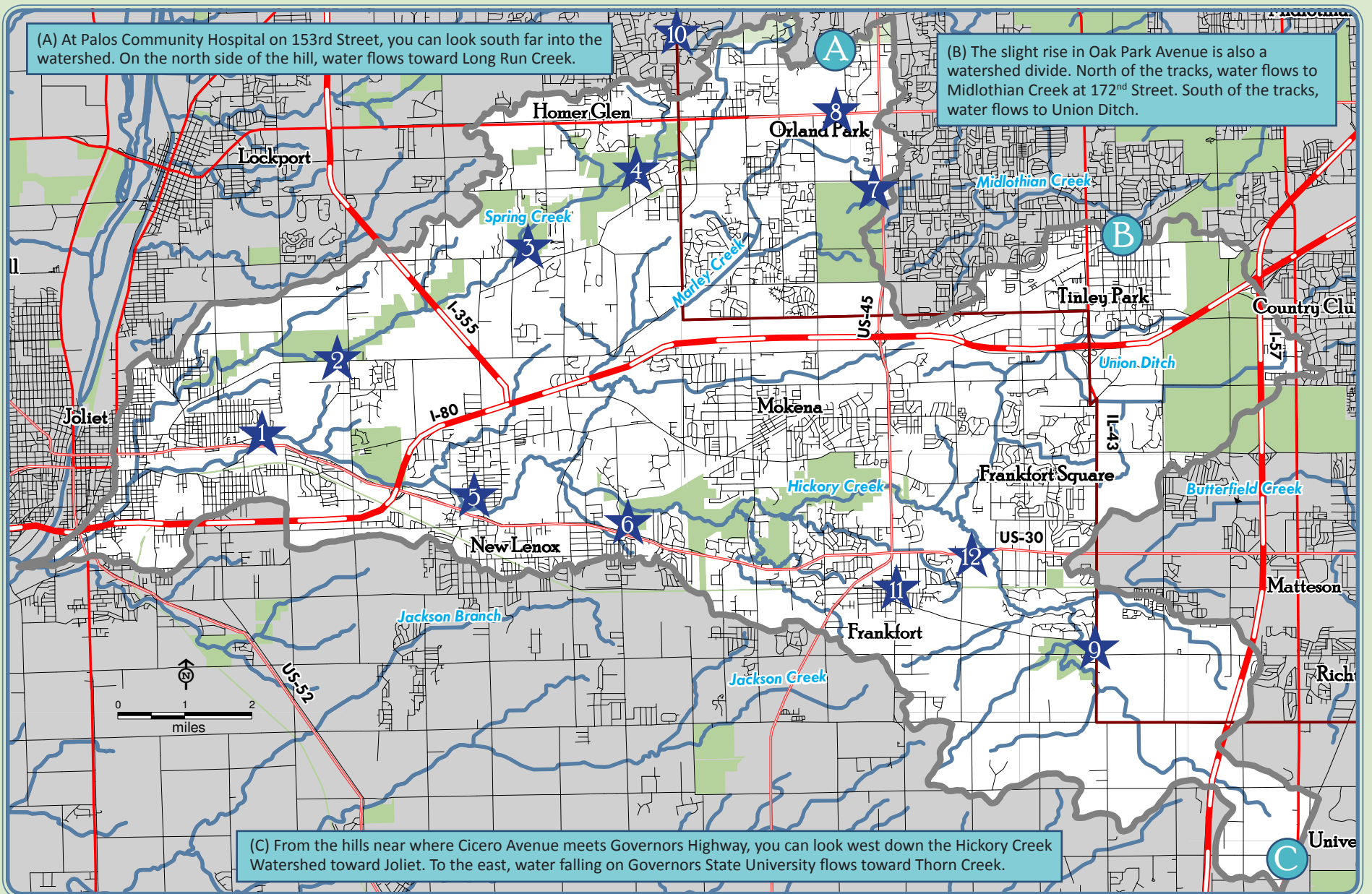
Hickory Creek remains one of our finest streams but the watershed will have at least twice the population by 2030. Preserving our stream will require all of us to work together.

Photo of Spring Creek, courtesy of Manuel Diaz

Explore the Hickory Creek Watershed

Hickory Creek and its major tributaries – Spring Creek, Marley Creek and Union Ditch – flow through Tinley Park, Orland Park, Frankfort, Frankfort Square, Mokena, Homer Glen, New Lenox and Joliet on their way to the Des Plaines River, the Illinois River, the Mississippi River, and the Gulf of Mexico.

107 square miles of land drains into the 100 miles of streams. The watershed boundaries, shown as the solid grey line, were formed about 12,000 years ago.



At hickorycreekwatershed.org you can see more photos, learn more, and get directions to each place.

Points of Interest

1 Pilcher Park Nature Center Over 640 acres of land provide a habitat for wildlife and the perfect environment for outdoor recreation. Bring your family out for hiking, biking or cross country skiing. The Nature Center offers a wide variety of scenic trails, plus a wonderful museum and staff to answer your questions. www.jolietpark.org

2 Hadley Valley This broad valley of Spring Creek (easily seen from Route 6 west of Gouger Road) has been preserved, and the stream is being brought back to health. Its man-made channel has been replaced by meanders that replicate natural conditions. Over time, the stream and floodplain habitat will be restored while the groundwater continues to be available for Joliet's water supply. www.reconnectwithnature.org

3 Messenger Woods Nature Preserve Messenger Woods is one of Will County's oldest and most unusual forest preserves. Visitors to the preserve can enjoy one of the few remaining forests in northeastern Illinois that have not been altered by grazing, cutting, farming, or development. www.reconnectwithnature.org

4 Messenger Marsh Beginning as a 2-acre purchase in 1989, Messenger Marsh Preserve has grown to over 625 acres over the past 20 years. In 2008, the District completed a major renovation to the access area on South Bell Road, and the preserve now offers a number of recreational activities. Trees are being planted to restore open woodland habitat which once dominated a large portion of the marsh. www.reconnectwithnature.org



5 New Lenox Creek-side Parks There are two parks in downtown New Lenox that have access to Hickory Creek: RS Corcoran Park/Vets Field (where fishing is permitted) and Haines Wayside Park. www.newlenoxparks.org

6 Hickory Creek Barrens Nature Preserve Hickory Creek Barrens marks the western boundary of the extensive 1,800-acre Hickory Creek Preserve located in Frankfort, New Lenox and Mokena. It is a nature preserve, providing complete protection for the plants and animals that reside here. This special designation is due to its ecological classification as a "barrens"—an area that shows progression from grasslands, to shrubs, to forests. www.reconnectwithnature.org

7 Orland Grassland It's a very special place within our midst. Settled in the 1800s, it was cleared for farming, and traces of old farms are still there. The clearing took its toll and much of the natural plant and animal life became scarce or left completely. A restoration plan is underway that calls for restoring the mix of prairie, wetland, oak savanna and oak woods. 960 acres of ponds, meadows, woods and rolling hills will be improved habitat for the bobolinks, yellow-breasted chats, orchard orioles, and other species that survive there. www.fpdcc.com/downloads/R7.pdf

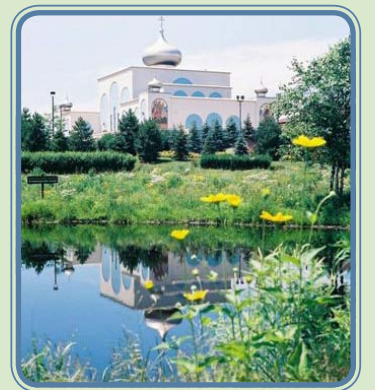
8 Lake Sedgewick This 95-acre lake includes a boat ramp, boardwalk, outdoor amphitheater, gazebo, council ring, nature trails, and hiking paths. www.orland-park.il.us

9 Sauk Trail Reservoir This is the only one that was built of three reservoirs planned for Hickory Creek in the 1970s to protect downstream areas from flooding. The 244-acre site is a Will County forest preserve. It can be viewed on the south side of Sauk Trail Road, but it is not accessible to the public because it is designed for a single purpose. A planned new bike trail will connect the reservoir with nearby Commissioner's Park. North of the reservoir, the Old Plank Road Trail crosses Hickory Creek over a historic stone-arch bridge constructed by the former Michigan-Central Railroad. (www.reconnectwithnature.org) A more recent example of sustainable flood hazard reduction is the Hadley Valley stream restoration, which serves a similar flood control purpose but also has greatly increased the habitat quality of Spring Creek and the recreational value of the land.



The following places are examples of sustainable practices, sometimes called "green infrastructure" that will be important to preserving our streams for the future. They use natural landscapes and the soil/vegetation complex to soak as much stormwater into the soils where it falls as is practical. And they add beautiful, diverse wildlife habitat to our neighborhoods. Go and experience them and see where similar, although smaller, features will fit into your property and your community.

10 Annunciation Byzantine Catholic Parish The vision for this Parish is that of a church in a natural environment—a living land that grows with the people who care for it and love it. In order to accomplish this vision, the parish decided to take a comprehensive look at their entire property. They prepared a Landscape Master Plan to guide the implementation of a sustainable vision for the parish, while serving as an educational demonstration to all who visit or attend the church. If you are interested in sustainable landscaping you should visit this site. It works, it is beautiful, and it has a spiritual aura that is unique. www.byzantinecatholic.com/nature.htm



11 Frankfort Historic District and Prairie Park The regional Old Plank Road Trail passes through the Historic District and enters Frankfort's nationally recognized Prairie Park. The 13-acre park integrates active and passive recreation with educational stations and demonstrates several resource management techniques within an environment suitable for all ages. www.villageoffrankfort.com/play

12 Frankfort Public Library and Windy Hill Farm Prairies These two landscapes, one just south of the Library and the other, ¼ mile to the east, adjoining Hickory Creek, are two of the earliest examples in the Chicago region of restored native prairie landscapes that work to preserve water resources.