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The background features a dark blue field with several large, light blue geometric shapes and arrows. There is a square with a smaller square inside it in the upper right, a circle in the lower left, and four L-shaped arrows pointing in the four cardinal directions (up, down, left, right) arranged in a circular pattern around the center.

McHenry County Coordinated Investment Study

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Introduction

Local governments play an essential role in ensuring the opportunities, prosperity, and quality of life that McHenry County communities enjoy. Every level of government, from the county to municipalities, townships, park districts, and school districts, plays a part in delivering the services that help residents live, learn, and work. From fire protection and snowplowing to elementary education and outdoor recreation, the network of government districts in McHenry County helps communities thrive.

This project, developed through CMAP's Local Technical Assistance (LTA) program, provided technical assistance to a group of local governments that wanted to explore innovative ways to deliver services more efficiently. Dozens of municipalities, townships, and special districts participated in the project, which McHenry County, the McHenry County Council of Governments (MCCG), and several municipalities initiated. The McHenry County Coordinated Investment Study includes recommendations related to service sharing, joint purchasing, collaborative planning, and other aspects of intergovernmental coordination.

The need for a coordinated investment study

In a time of constrained resources and rising costs, governments must find creative ways to deliver services. The coordinated investment study aimed to ensure residents and businesses enjoy a high level of public services and examined how all levels of government in McHenry County can better coordinate activities and investments.

Local governments in the county approached CMAP with an ambitious vision for a countywide study that would go deeper than past studies in Illinois. Many counties and municipalities have completed valuable studies of the potential for service sharing; however, many of these studies have either looked only at service sharing or a small set of neighboring municipalities. To fully capture the potential of intergovernmental coordination, McHenry County pushed to include all types of local governments and a range of collaborative strategies beyond service sharing in the coordinated investment study. The progressive approach drew on an inclusive engagement process for staff and officials with diverse governmental experience.

For the past two years, the project team has conducted research, collected and analyzed data, and engaged partners to assess local government practices and identify new opportunities to share services and build capacity for collaboration. The coordinated investment study is designed to help local governments meet the public's needs while facing the reality of rising costs and uncertain funding. The study is intended to help local governments reduce operating costs through collaboration, capacity building, and doing more with what they have.

The coordinated investment study will implement [ON TO 2050](#)'s recommendations to build local government capacity, use collaborative leadership to address regional challenges, and encourage partnerships and consolidation. To ensure capacity that can achieve a strong quality



of life, local governments must collaborate with each other to coordinate decisions and investments related to infrastructure operations and maintenance. Improved coordination can speed up the construction and maintenance of infrastructure, reduce the number of times that roadways must be reconstructed, and improve system reliability. Integrating shared-service projects across local capital plans, as well as future comprehensive, strategic, and operational plans, will maximize the benefits that residents of CMAP's seven counties see from public investments. It also helps our communities achieve their land use, transportation, and housing goals.

The coordinated investment study provides information and analysis to support local decisions. The study will help McHenry County, MCCG, municipalities, and special districts understand and move forward on the types of sharing and coordination initiatives that are appropriate for their needs.

Organization of the study

The study primarily focuses on recommended strategies that will allow local governments in McHenry County to advance intergovernmental coordination and efficiency. The study builds off McHenry County's leadership role on coordinated investment and shared services. It documents the process local governments and the project team followed to develop these recommendations and provides a framework for other counties to pursue similar studies. Recognizing staff and officials from all levels of local government who provided valuable contributions, the study highlights the process and findings of the project's engagement activities.

The McHenry County Coordination Investment Study is organized into the following sections:

- Section 1: Introduction
- Section 2: Process for developing the study
- Section 3: Coordinated investment background and research
- Section 4: Engagement summary
- Section 5: Recommendations
- Section 6: Implementation

Process for developing the study

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the McHenry County Coordinated Investment Study. Complementary processes of research, analysis, and engagement all helped create the study. For about two years, the project team pursued a process through the input of an advisory committee that included staff from a variety of local and countywide governmental entities. The project team researched precedents for county-level shared service and coordination plans from around the country and best practices for implementation. The project team also collected and analyzed data local governments provided through an inventory of



services, assets, and personnel. The heart of the process was a series of engagement activities with staff and officials from all levels of government. Engagement activities included interviews, focus groups, and a series of goal-setting workshops with local government staff and officials. These workshops helped identify challenges and opportunities, as well as convened key partners to support the project and build a platform for implementation. The details and findings of the engagement process are described in the “Engagement summary” section of the study.

Through the team’s research, the advisory committee’s guidance, and the engagement activities, common issues and opportunities emerged that provided direction for the recommendations in the McHenry County Coordinated Investment Study. During implementation of the project, stakeholders will refine and expand on the recommendations.

The final phases of the project took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the serious impact COVID-19 has had on public health and the economy, the pandemic has limited the ability for stakeholders to convene for workshops and meetings and placed considerable demands on participating governments. The economic downturn triggered by COVID-19 will have a lasting effect on the tax base and other revenue sources that municipalities and counties typically rely on. Although the study’s recommendations are not specifically tailored to the challenges of COVID-19, the suggestions can help local governments recover from the pandemic through strategies like using intergovernmental cooperation as a way to meet service demand despite revenue challenges.

Guiding principles

Several overarching themes emerged from the first phase of the planning process that guide the study’s strategies, including:

McHenry County is already leading on coordinated investment.

Staff and officials from every type of district that participated in the study emphasized how they already are doing a great deal to coordinate activities. To make the study useful to these districts and to demonstrate their efforts to their constituents, these stakeholders emphasized the need for the study to highlight their successes and explain the importance of continuing that work. The engagement process showed how staff and officials across all types of districts in McHenry County want to be doing as much as possible to coordinate and build efficiency. While some coordination efforts may be challenging, government stakeholders in McHenry County broadly share the goals of the project.

Government districts wish to build on what is already working.

Staff and officials want to learn more about what their neighbors are doing. They are interested in connecting a greater number of participants to current programs and learning how to scale up what is effective.



Staff and officials have strong interest in networking.

High attendance and positive feedback at engagement workshops highlight the demand and support for this type of study. Participants value their existing networks and they have expressed interest in developing those networks through meetings, such as the workshops, and other face-to-face opportunities to discuss common challenges. Based on interviews with staff and officials outside McHenry County who have completed shared service studies, standing working groups involving on-the-ground staff are an essential component of successful implementation.

Local control and input are key to maintaining support and participation.

Many stakeholders expressed frustration that much of the conversation about government efficiency, including at the state legislature, happens without their input. Local staff and officials feel that to be effective, legislation and programs that address local service delivery and operations must incorporate the contributions and insights of local governments. Policies developed through local engagement will be better and more implementable. A stable, durable program of coordinated investment strategies should incorporate input from a diverse set of staff and officials throughout its development and implementation.

McHenry County governments should build foundations for collaborative planning.

Throughout the study, staff and officials discussed the importance of strategic planning to facilitate intergovernmental coordination and communicate goals. Several current efforts designed for one aspect of coordination could have greater effects if they were to be used as a basis for joint planning. For example, the McHenry County Municipal Partnering Initiative (MPI) has been highly successful with coordinating joint purchasing and contract bids. But the MPI also has the potential to be a forum for coordinating capital improvement planning and pavement management, as well as other transportation, street, and utility needs.

McHenry County governments should address current barriers to collaboration.

Participating staff and officials discussed several challenges that hinder their ability to collaborate. To be successful, new programs and initiatives developed from this study will need to be responsive to these barriers. Some of the challenges stakeholders commonly cited were the heavy workload for public servants that leave little time to innovate, the burden of unfunded mandates, and reporting requirements that greatly vary for different types of districts. Stakeholders also cited the relative isolation of government entities in the western part of the county. Some feel collaboration happens more naturally in more populated parts of McHenry County where districts are located close to one another.

Local governments seek a platform and framework for local decisions through this study.

Throughout the process, the project team emphasized the goal of providing data and analysis that support local decision-making rather than trying to make those decisions in the study itself. Local staff and officials, including the advisory committee, are best positioned to make decisions because of their understanding of their specific responsibilities, relationships with



peers, and the political legitimacy that they have with residents and businesses in the county. The study's recommendations focus on establishing forums that enable stakeholders to coordinate their actions, as well as data and principles they can use to guide their decisions. Rather than suggest specific coordination actions between particular districts, this approach will help the county's various districts maximize efficiency and savings in the long run. While gains can happen immediately and can be quantified, examples in other states show that these initial savings can be underwhelming and fail to garner enthusiastic support. In the long run, county stakeholders need to be set up for success to continue finding new opportunities for savings and improvements to service delivery and be in a position to act on them when they arise.

Coordinated investment background and research

To create a study rooted in the particular needs of McHenry County while also on the cutting edge of innovative service delivery, the project team researched shared service initiatives from across the country and the local context to implementation. The project team built the foundation for this study on reviews of scholarly research about national shared-service efforts and interviews with practitioners and implementers.

Local governments in McHenry County

More than 100 different government entities provide public services to McHenry County residents and businesses. The diverse group includes general purpose governments, special districts, and others. General purpose governments, such as municipalities, townships, and the county, provide a range of services while school, park, library, and other special districts provide a narrower set of services within their boundaries.

The division of service responsibilities among so many entities creates a complex arrangement that can be challenging to navigate for residents and businesses. Each unit of government has its own set of elections, jurisdictional boundaries, responsibilities, and budgeting processes, which can differ even among districts of the same type. Understanding what entities provide which services to a particular household or business can require research and effort.

The McHenry County Coordinated Investment Study looked at 139 governmental entities located in or adjacent to McHenry County. The total includes 12 districts that have their primary offices outside of the county. While most of the districts' jurisdictional boundaries cover subareas within the county, two of the entities, the McHenry County Conservation District and the McHenry County Housing Authority, have the same jurisdictions as the county.



Figure 1. Governments in McHenry County

Government type	Number of governments		
	Majority within County	Partially within County	Total
Cemetery District	2	0	2
Community College District	1	4	5
Conservation District	1	0	1
County	1	0	1
Drainage Districts	2	0	2
Elementary School District	9	0	9
Fire Protection District	17	1	18
High School District	4	0	4
Housing Authority	1	0	1
Library District	12	1	13
Municipality	27	3	30
Park District	4	1	5
Rescue Squad District	1	0	1
Township Road & Bridge District	17	0	17
Soil and Water Conservation District	1	0	1
Township	17	0	17
Unit School District	5	4	9
Wastewater District	1	2	3
Total	127	12	139

Source: CMAP analysis of data provided by McHenry County, the McHenry County Council of Governments, and the Illinois State Comptroller

The structure of local government in Illinois is the direct result of policy decisions made more than 100 years ago. From 1870 until 1970, the Illinois Constitution placed strict limits on the amount of debt that local governments could accumulate. This provision restricted their ability to raise funds for new services and led to the proliferation of special districts providing services that traditionally would have been provided by local governments, including parks, libraries, fire protection, and public education. These restrictions were lifted in 1970, giving local governments greater flexibility to expand their services. Under current regulations, many special districts are permitted to merge with overlapping county and municipal governments, but relatively few districts have done so. In addition to the logistical and political challenges, consolidation is not a universally beneficial approach for all overlapping entities, some of which already are delivering a combination of consolidated and specialized services.

Unlike special districts, which have a specific focus, the role of general-purpose governments is more difficult to define. The Illinois Constitution gives these governments great flexibility to meet the needs of their constituents.

In McHenry County, the county government provides a broad range of services intended to support the economy, human services, and the transportation system. Specifically, the county is responsible for maintaining highways, drafting and enforcing stormwater regulations, and operating the sheriff's office and the county courts system. County officials can appoint members to special boards that focus on issues, ranging from mental health and economic development to historic preservation and conservation.

The 17 townships and township road and bridge districts in McHenry County share identical geographic boundaries but provide different services. Townships oversee property assessment for the basis of local taxation and provide general assistance for residents in need. Townships also tend to provide programs for children and senior citizens, and assistance for people who are disabled, as well as health and transportation services. Road and bridge districts reconstruct, plow, and maintain roads and bridges outside state, county, municipal, and other local jurisdiction. In recent years, there have been attempts to dissolve townships and road districts via referendum, but none has succeeded.

Within incorporated areas, municipalities typically provide all services that are not provided by the county, a township, or other special district. Municipalities most often provide police protection and zoning and development oversight, as well as maintain roads and provide water and sewer services. Mayors, village presidents, city council members, and trustees play an important role as representatives of their residents in negotiations with other governmental entities and businesses. In some cases, municipalities also provide parks, fire protection, and other narrower services. Municipalities do not always directly provide all services through their own staff. Many opt to contract for the provision of services by private entities or other units of government.

Studies from outside the region

Illinois is not alone in experiencing increasing challenges to delivering high quality local services in the face of rising costs and uncertain revenues. Although few states feature an array of local governments as expansive as Illinois, many share a complex system of overlapping, specialized jurisdictions at various scales. Seeking greater efficiency, some of these states have studied ways to increase service sharing and use other innovations. In the early stages of the McHenry County Coordinated Investment Study, the project team examined recent county-level shared services and coordinated investment studies from communities in New York and California. The local government ecosystem in each state is unique and can be best understood in its own local context. Still, while no one-size-fits-all approach to collaborative efficiency exists, the studies revealed several common themes, including an emphasis on government



stakeholder engagement and transparency. Numerous studies also explored similar strategies for reducing costs and improving services, including shared services, shared equipment and facilities, and joint purchasing. [Appendix B](#) provides detailed summaries of the California and New York programs.

Takeaways

Shared services

New York and California's shared services strategies typically involve consolidating duplicative services, sharing responsibility for service delivery, unifying contracts with third parties to perform services, reorganizing responsibilities among entities, or creating new entities to provide common public services. The overarching goal behind sharing services is providing effective services as efficiently as possible. Specific services can vary based on the capacity and service demands of local governments.

Frequently shared services include:

- Emergency communication for fire, rescue, and police dispatch
- Parks and open space maintenance
- Street construction and maintenance
 - A county may contract with a municipality to maintain roads through their jurisdiction
 - Neighboring municipalities may divide responsibilities for maintaining roads that extend into both communities rather than work to the municipal border and turning around
- Information technology staff
- Sewer maintenance
 - Create an employee pool for multiple small systems, which provides better service to customers, and allows employees more flexibility to schedule time off
- Animal control
- Building inspections
- Hiring shared employees
 - Two or more communities split the salary of a full-time employee to work for multiple communities

Shared facilities and equipment

Sharing facilities or equipment can help multiple entities make efficient use of infrastructure and reduce expenditures, such as large purchases and maintenance. Generally, entities agree to jointly use a shared facility or large equipment based on an agreed payment structure that is structured around frequency of use. Shared facilities can be joint construction efforts, but often take the form of a larger entity offering space to a smaller entity in exchange for payments or other services. Similarly, shared equipment agreements often are structured by one entity making its equipment available for a fee. Shared facilities frequently are used by special districts



that make limited use of certain facilities and equipment, such as automotive garages and snow removal equipment. Other examples include:

- Community event spaces
- Administrative office space
- Composting facilities
- Sand and salt storage facilities
- Road maintenance equipment
- Utility equipment, such as front-end loaders and skid steers

Joint purchasing

Joint purchasing is one of the most common cost-saving strategies used by local governments. Governments often secure cheaper rates and save taxpayers money by combining orders for equipment, supplies, materials, and certain services, such as administrative services and IT. As an added bonus, joint purchasing ensures various types of equipment are compatible, which is particularly beneficial for emergency responders.

Consolidations and mergers

Consolidations and mergers often are controversial. In some cases, these strategies can save money and lead to better services, but these benefits are not automatic. Before pursuing this option, entities should analyze whether the cost savings will outweigh the cost of completing the merger, as well as determine how the costs and benefits will be distributed across the affected jurisdictions. In some cases, many of the benefits can be achieved through other, less controversial means, such as sharing services, facilities, or equipment.

Investing in efficiency

A common theme across the various reports included in this analysis is the importance of investing in efficiency. While some strategies, such as joint purchasing and service sharing, require relatively little upfront investment, other strategies, such as mergers or sharing facilities, cannot happen without funding. Both the New York CWSSI and the California Little Hoover Commission recognized this challenge, and highlighted the importance of one-time grant programs. Because many of these grants are intended to reduce long-term costs, entities could use a revolving fund system to fund these strategies.

Case studies

Throughout the coordinated investment study, the project team researched models for intergovernmental coordination from McHenry County, northeastern Illinois, and the nation. These programs and policies provide examples McHenry County stakeholders can learn from to strengthen existing efforts, introduce new ideas, and provide evidence for the benefits of collaboration.



The circumstances and local government ecosystem of McHenry County are unique. Successful initiatives from other parts of the United States, or even other parts of Illinois, likely cannot simply be applied in McHenry County with the same results. But many states share a common goal of government efficiency and improved service delivery. The nationwide interest has provided fertile ground for policy experimentation and numerous examples that can inform local solutions appropriate for McHenry County.

Case studies in this document describe several current coordinated investment and service-sharing initiatives. The case studies are meant to illustrate some approaches that may help McHenry County partners advance the goals of this project.

Regulatory framework

A complicated legal framework in Illinois strongly regulates the roles of municipalities, townships, counties, and special districts. Laws and regulations dictate the powers and responsibilities of different government districts and influence how entities can collaborate with one another. State law enables service sharing, joint purchasing and many other strategies explored in this study. In general, local governments of all types are empowered to pursue the kinds of collaboration that this study considers as paths toward greater efficiency. [Appendix C](#) further discusses how local governments in northeastern Illinois have used some of the relevant state laws. Local governments should consult with their attorneys, confer with local governments, and seek other guidance on best practices when considering these approaches. Entities need to have sound contracts, intergovernmental agreements, and other documentation to use these approaches effectively while being protected from liability or other risks.

Additionally, in recent years Illinois has made several notable revisions to the statutes governing how local governments may consolidate or dissolve. This is particularly true for governments in McHenry County, which are subject to newly adopted laws intended to facilitate the dissolution of townships and road districts.

Specifically, Illinois has lifted size limitations on townships to allow neighboring townships to merge and granted residents within a township or road district the right to petition for a referendum on dissolution. The state also has given township and road district leaders the authority to voluntarily place such a referendum on the ballot. If a referendum is successful, the county becomes responsible for certain services previously provided by the township or road district. The county also has the option of assuming other responsibilities at their discretion. Additionally, municipalities may make an offer to the county to assume certain powers and responsibilities of the dissolved road district. To pay for this work, the county has the authority to levy a tax of up to 90 percent of the township or road district's previous property tax in the area. To date, this law has resulted in two township dissolution referenda, although both were rejected by considerable margins. State law also allows for the amicable merger of select units of local government with counties or municipalities that have the same boundaries. Governing



boards of both entities need to approve the merger. When this occurs, the county or municipality that absorbs the unit of government takes possession of all their employees, real estate, debts, and obligations.

Illinois law also gives county governments considerable oversight over other units of local government. Counties with 300,000 to 2,000,000 residents (such as McHenry County) may request detailed financial information from any unit of government where the county appoints the majority of its board members. The requested information may include finances, budgets, contracts, employment, and ethics policies. DuPage County has used this power to assert greater oversight of certain local government districts. A more detailed overview of this process is provided in [Appendix C](#).

Inventory of local government services, facilities, equipment, and personnel

As part of the assessment of different government services and assets for the coordinated investment study, the project team distributed an inventory for staff and officials to complete. Working with partners at municipalities and special districts, the team created a template participants could use to document the services they provide, types of personnel they employ, and assets they own and maintain. The form outlined questions across four topic areas, covering services, facilities, equipment, and personnel. Districts listed the services they offer, whether each service is conducted in-house or contracted, and whether service-sharing already is occurring. The form also provided the opportunity to list the age and location of equipment and facilities, as well as the number of full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees in various departments.

The project team received completed inventories from 22 government districts.¹ While the number of inventories represents only a fraction of the total government districts in McHenry County, the responses provide a useful cross-section of district types and sizes. The completed inventories cover six different types of governments, including general-purpose entities and special districts. The inventories not only provide a window into the types of assets, personnel, and services that make up local government operations and planning, but also give insight into what types of services governments in McHenry County are eager to explore sharing.

The project team used the information gathered from the inventory to inform discussion with staff and officials at goal-setting workshops. Key takeaways from the inventory relate to service-sharing, including:

¹ Completed inventories were submitted by McHenry County, the McHenry County Conservation District, eleven municipalities, four fire or fire and rescue districts, three park districts, and two townships.



- The services that most governments already share include building inspection, criminal investigations, emergency management, and road striping.
- Many districts listed a range of public works services, including streets maintenance and sewer/water maintenance, as services they would like to explore sharing. Several reported already sharing some of these services via intergovernmental agreements or joint contracts between multiple governments and private companies.
- Governments expressed interest in sharing a variety of landscaping services. Tree removal was the service the greatest number of respondents expressed interest in sharing. Only one government reported currently sharing this service.
- Some of the smallest municipalities that submitted inventories expressed the most wide-ranging interest in exploring service-sharing and listed most of the services in the template as ones they would like to learn more about sharing.

Better shared knowledge among local governments of the services, facilities, assets, and personnel they control would be a useful tool for supporting collaboration. A fuller, up-to-date understanding of what resources exist throughout McHenry County would make it easier for local governments to find partners and pursue sharing arrangements.

The inventory process makes it clear that gathering comprehensive data from all government units is difficult. Staff and officials who already are busy have to spend extensive time and effort to compile the information for the inventory. To increase responses while also building goodwill, partners who are well known to local governments should find ways to communicate with one another the value of providing the information. A trusted partner making these requests also could contribute to higher participation. Responses can be collected in a common, shareable format that makes it simple for governments to provide recurring updates. The collected data can be housed and shared as an online resource available to staff and officials from all participating governments.

Future service demand

The process of creating more efficient models of service delivery should take into account current needs and the potential future demand for services. Many factors influence the demand for services, including population growth, demographic shifts, development patterns, and the expectations of residents and businesses. While it is impossible to predict exactly how service demand will change, local governments can think about how future trends might drive demand by looking at how McHenry County's population and employment are projected to change over the next few decades.

As part of ON TO 2050, CMAP created a socioeconomic forecast for northeastern Illinois. The forecast estimates future population and jobs, age distribution, household size, and other characteristics. The forecast also includes a process that allocates population and employment growth across the region. The allocation is based on a range of inputs, including current level of



development, developable acreage, current planned developments, and local plans and zoning. This allocation is based on a scenario where the recommended policies and goals in ON TO 2050 are implemented. The forecast was completed before the COVID-19 pandemic, which is likely to influence future population trends within the region in ways that the forecast cannot predict. The forecast is not designed to predict the exact locations of future population and employment growth but can help local governments project changes in service demand and the potential revenues that can support those demands. Considering future growth particularly is important in McHenry County, where most governments depend on property tax revenue to fund their activities and services.

The ON TO 2050 socioeconomic forecast projects that McHenry County will grow from an estimated population of 305,696 in 2015 to 473,471 by 2050, an increase of 55 percent. It also projects a 51 percent increase in jobs located in McHenry County, going from 98,153 jobs in 2015 to 148,123 by 2050. For context, the allocation projects a 27 percent increase in the overall population of the seven-county region and a 22 percent increase in employment.

Determining how growth affects local government finances through increased demand for services is complicated. The fiscal impact of the services that growth requires depends on the form growth takes, how impact fees and taxes capture revenue, and many other factors. The growth that is anticipated to happen in McHenry County over the next several decades underscores the need for thoughtful, collaborative planning. By working together to plan for anticipated growth, local governments have better chances at providing services in a sustainable way. Markets transcend the boundaries of municipalities and other local governments, making multijurisdictional planning a powerful tool for projecting service and staffing needs, as well as demand for facilities and infrastructure. By planning collaboratively for the anticipated fiscal impact of future development, local governments that serve McHenry County communities can proactively identify capital investment opportunities, partner to deliver services, and bolster their ability to meet their residents' and businesses' coming needs.

Engagement summary

The number of governments in McHenry County and the complexity of the coordinated investment study prompted the project team to design a thorough engagement process. In the county, more than 100 different districts provide a variety of public services across a large geographical area. Governments that are engaged early in a coordination initiative help build a future where the county's districts routinely collaborate and partner with one another. The outreach process for the study also helped the project team learn more about what functions various governments perform, what challenges they face, and what assistance would help them meet the public's needs. Engaging staff and officials from as many districts as possible also helped communicate and shape how the project could address politically sensitive topics. By speaking directly with the project team, these stakeholders were able to understand the goals of



the study and feel invested from the beginning in developing and implementing recommendations.

Beginning in spring 2019, CMAP worked with McHenry County, the McHenry County Council of Governments, and the advisory committee to engage all types of local government entities in the project. The project team surveyed local governments, attended regular meetings of government staff and officials, and conducted interviews and focus groups. The main engagement process culminated in a series of five workshops in late 2019. Staff and officials collaborated to discuss significant issues and opportunities related to intergovernmental collaboration.

Advisory committee

The advisory committee has provided guidance and feedback on existing issues and opportunities, developed central goals, reviewed plan documents, and identified stakeholders who should be involved in the planning process. Starting with the group of municipal managers and administrators who developed the initial concept for the coordinated investment study, the project team invited new members over time to join the committee and provide additional perspective.

The committee met several times in 2018 to develop the project scope and timeline, consider outreach strategies, and create a template for the inventory the team asked each government district to complete. In 2019, the committee first met to advise the project team on data collection and discuss how the team should engage special districts. At the final meeting of 2019, the committee discussed data from collected inventory responses, as well as the findings from stakeholder interviews, research on national best practices, and plans for goal-setting workshops. The committee met in May 2020 to approve the draft recommendations of the study and will continue to meet as needed to advise on implementation.

Stakeholder interviews

Stakeholder interviews included meetings and phone calls with staff and officials from government districts in McHenry County, northeastern Illinois, and other parts of the country. The project team interviewed staff from several municipalities in McHenry County, including city and village managers, and public works and finance directors. The team spoke with professionals who work with intergovernmental programs, including purchasing cooperatives and service contractors. Through these interviews, the team learned about the benefits and challenges of implementing partnerships. Key themes stakeholders shared in these conversations included the need to prioritize long-term thinking, as well as the challenges of balancing cost equity concerns across boundaries and bridging the gap between large, high-capacity municipalities and small villages or special districts. A major theme addressed by stakeholders was how a great deal of service sharing, networking, and coordination already is



taking place, but often in informal settings. Many of these efforts are lightly documented and dependent on the strong personal relationships between staff.

Local government focus groups

To supplement the municipal and county perspective of the advisory committee, the team focused on reaching out to staff and officials of special districts. The project team appeared at regularly scheduled meetings to introduce themselves and the study to representatives of many different entities. Over several months, the team met with township supervisors, park district administrators, fire chiefs, highway commissioners, and school superintendents.

The meetings gave the team the opportunity to explain the project's goals, answer questions, and reassure stakeholders that their participation would help shape the study's recommendations. The project team treated these meetings as focus groups, engaging attendees in conversations about their experiences, priorities, and concerns. The conversations offered valuable opportunities to engage directly with stakeholders about consolidation. Staff and officials had opportunities to ask the project team how the study would address the topic. Stakeholders advised the project team on participants, the challenges facing their districts, and the possible recommendations that would be most useful. Stakeholders also provided insight into the current efforts to share services, personnel, and equipment. Many of the staff and officials that attended the outreach meetings also later participated in the study's workshops.

Goal-setting workshops

The project team led a series of five workshops for staff and elected officials from local governments in late 2019. The workshops primarily served as a forum for public servants to share their work toward greater efficiency and intergovernmental coordination, and establish goals for the study. Participants were invited to learn more about the project, discuss the challenges they face, and generate and evaluate ideas for how to respond to these challenges efficiently and effectively. Through small group discussions at each workshop, participants shared ideas for the project team to research and ensure the study explored topics relevant to local governments. The workshops also built a network of public servants in McHenry County who can remain engaged for the remainder of the study, implementation, and beyond.

The goal-setting workshops covered five topical areas:

- Administration and finance
- Building and development
- Streets, transportation, and utilities
- Police, fire, and emergency services
- Fleet management



Following an initial presentation by the project team, facilitators at each workshop sorted the attendees into small discussion groups featuring a mix of district types and responsibilities. The groups included staff from the same subregions of the county to encourage conversation among neighbors beyond the meetings. Each group discussed their goals, brainstormed ideas for potential shared services and intergovernmental coordination, and assessed priorities for further research. They also shared many examples of current initiatives that could help build the project.

Staff and officials from fire districts, library districts, park districts, school districts, municipalities, townships, road districts, county government, and the McHenry County Conservation District took part in the conversations. More than 100 staff and officials participated in the five workshops. Participants included village and city managers, public works directors, IT professionals, police chiefs, fire chiefs, school superintendents, and other specialized staff. Between 30 and 60 people participated in each workshop, with many people attending more than one event. The large attendance and lively discussion at these workshops showed the strong culture of partnership and collaboration that exists in McHenry County, and the potential for even more collaboration.

Spotlight on participation

A total of **113** staff and officials participated in the workshops:²

- 55 municipal staff and officials
- 22 county staff and officials
- 13 school district staff and officials
- 6 park district staff and officials
- 6 library district staff and officials
- 4 conservation district staff and officials
- 4 township staff and officials
- 4 staff and officials from other local governments

A total of **43** different local government districts or organizations participated in the workshops. Participants provided expertise drawn from their leadership roles. The roles included:

- Municipal administrator
- Trustee
- Highway commissioner
- School superintendent
- Director of public works/engineer
- Police chief/sheriff
- Emergency management director
- Fire chief
- Land use planner/community development director
- GIS analyst
- Purchasing director

² Because one participant serves a role with two different units of local government, the number of participants broken down by government type totals 114 rather than 113.



- Fleet manager
- IT manager
- Finance director/CFO
- Parks director

Workshop Themes

Several themes emerged during the goal-setting workshops. Certain themes were common across several of the topical workshops, while others were more specific to particular types of services and programs. The following is a sample of the key takeaways from the workshops.

Cross-cutting themes

- Local governments already are doing a great deal to coordinate and find opportunities for efficiency. Residents do not always see their efforts. Staff and officials would like to more effectively inform the public of all their efforts to save costs, as well as their budgeting and funding constraints.
- Districts see intergovernmental coordination as a way to save money, reduce the burden on staff, learn about what neighbors doing, and signal to the public that governments take efficiency seriously.
- A dedicated central coordinator should be appointed to lead coordination throughout the county.
- An online portal to share resources and facilitate collaboration between government districts would be a key element of coordinated investment.
- Staff and officials would like to have regular meetings and networking opportunities like these workshops.
- Greater engagement of smaller government districts and districts from western and northern McHenry County that are less integrated into current efforts.
- Expanding joint purchasing can help reduce costs across a range of government operations.
- Government districts would like to do more joint strategic and capital planning.

Administration and finance

- Coordinating or sharing human resources activities could expand access to staff training, lower costs for health insurance and employee assistance programs, help standardize payroll software, and help districts recruit staff.
- Stakeholders are interested in sharing staff, particularly to address the difficulty of hiring part-time and seasonal staff.
- Staff and officials would like to see more shared IT resources, such as software user groups and joint purchasing.
- Document management and records storage present growing demands on small districts.

Building and development

- Moving toward a common building code, or greater clarity about what jurisdictions are using which building codes, would help local governments and developers.



- More guidance on best practices for sharing building inspectors since communities have attempted it with mixed results.
- Opportunities exist for coordinating software purchasing and training to lower costs and aid staff.
- Many communities use the same software for their building and development work, but contract for it individually at high costs.

Streets, transportation, and utilities

- Numerous “handshake” agreements already exist to facilitate informal sharing services and equipment for public works.
- Joint purchasing is common and successful for streets, transportation, and utilities services.
- The lists of equipment and staff that can be shared during emergencies should be regularly updated and available for normal operations.
- Stakeholders would be interested in mapping subregional service areas that cross jurisdictional boundaries to enable more efficient delivery of services, such as plowing and refuse collection.
- A countywide need exists for access to high-speed internet.
- A shared staff member or a centralized GIS account could address differences in access to GIS services between communities of different resource levels.
- Shared facilities for local salt and fuel storage would allow governments to buy in larger amounts and provide price stability.
- Governments recognize the benefits of coordinated planning of capital projects but see many challenges.
- Local governments are interested in pursuing coordinated pavement management, collaborating on data collection, and developing a consistent rating system.

Police, fire, and emergency services

- Emergency service providers offer many models for intergovernmental coordination, including disaster response and multiple efforts that the sheriff’s office coordinates with local partners.
- The consolidation of 9-1-1 call centers initially was complex and resulted in staffing cuts but now is seen as a major success. It can be a model for other consolidated service efforts.
- Finding qualified staff, especially part-time staff, remains a challenge for police and fire districts.
- Confusion about boundaries and jurisdiction is a barrier to efficient provision of services.
- Shared training opportunities would be welcome.

Fleet management

- Best practices of asset management should be widely and consistently adopted, but require training, buy-in, and expensive software.



- Sharing services often is preferable to sharing equipment alone, since it guarantees operation by properly trained staff.
- Governments are interested in creating a shared garage and maintenance facility with shared mechanics or allowing smaller entities to use another entity’s larger facilities for a fee.
- Some districts are pursuing fleet leasing rather than buying vehicles and equipment outright. Many other districts are interested in exploring the idea.
- Interest exists in peer-to-peer sales of fleet equipment rather than going through a middleman.

Recommendations

This study focuses on setting up the governments of McHenry County to meet the evolving challenges of service delivery through enhanced coordinated investment and intergovernmental coordination. Given the complexity of service delivery and the number of government districts that serve county residents and businesses, it would be impossible for this study to determine the optimal arrangement of all government assets, facilities, personnel, and policies. Moreover, the provision of services is dynamic. An optimal arrangement at the conclusion of this study quickly could become outdated as needs and opportunities change. The study, instead, focuses on the most relevant information and critical steps the county, McHenry County Council of Governments, and other partners can take to pursue sustained coordination that meets constituent needs and flexibly responds to service sharing, coordination, and consolidation opportunities.

The recommendations of the McHenry County Coordinated Investment Study are organized into the following categories:

1. Establish a coordination portal
2. Appoint a county coordinator
3. Facilitate convening and networking
4. Expand joint purchasing
5. Support collaborative planning
6. Initiate pilot projects
7. Coordinate policy and advocacy

Recommendation One: Establish a coordination portal

An online resource that enables coordination, facilitates service and equipment sharing, and provides resources for staff and officials while improving transparency and public engagement.

Throughout the planning process, staff and officials expressed interest in an online resource that would make it easier to coordinate, share services and equipment, and provide templates,



examples, and resources on best practices. The idea of using a website or other online resource as a portal came up at each of the five goal-setting workshops. Stakeholders identified numerous features the portal could offer and recommended both a public-facing side with information for residents, and a government side with restricted access to resources for staff and officials. Stakeholders recognized the importance of designating a point organization with dedicated staff time and financial resources for creating and managing the portal. Potential hosts for the portal could be McHenry County, McHenry County Council of Governments, or the McHenry County Council of Mayors through their existing website for the MPI.

1.1 Create a government site

An online portal designed for staff and officials can be a cornerstone for intergovernmental coordination. It can be a repository for templates and best practices, a platform for service and asset matchmaking, and a forum for exchanging ideas. Some elements could include:

- **Regional resource list.** Staff and officials expressed interest in having access to a regularly updated list of equipment, data, and services available for sharing by partners in the county. The Illinois Public Works Mutual Aid Network provides a model. It compiles public works resources available for emergency use. County stakeholders could expand the list to include non-emergency items and update the list more frequently.
- **Templates.** Many staff and officials said they would benefit from templates that enable service sharing. The portal could provide local and national examples of model language.
- **Bidding opportunities.** The coordinators of the MPI have been working with the McHenry County Council of Mayors to seek additional administrative support. The support includes an enhanced website that can expand the initiative. Integrating the initiative into the online portal could be a way to expand its reach to a wider audience, including non-municipal governments.
- **Training opportunities.** Throughout the goal-setting workshops, staff discussed how they would like to see more coordination with trainings. Smaller districts feel training opportunities are not as available to them. Many people said the small audience for local trainings means frequently sending staff to other parts of the state for required training. Through the portal, staff may be able to organize more participants, making it more cost effective to bring in trainers to McHenry County.
- **Human resources.** The workshops identified many common human resources needs. In addition to trainings, participants expressed interest in exploring joint employee assistance programs, joint purchasing of health insurance, standardized payroll software, and help finding part-time and seasonal staff.
- **Information technology.** Stakeholders also were interested in IT resources. Coordination through the portal can enable users to share what software they use for different functions and help form user groups of the same software.



- **Long-range plan documents and maps database.** To facilitate coordinated planning between multiple jurisdictions, the portal can include a database of adopted comprehensive plans, subarea plans, and capital improvement plans.
- **Forum.** The portal also can provide a forum for the general exchange of knowledge. A bulletin board, where staff and officials can post questions, exchange best practices, and connect with colleagues would be a helpful resource.

1.2 Create a public site

The public side of the portal could provide information to McHenry County residents in a way that makes them feel better connected to the staff and officials who serve them. The portal can help increase public awareness of resources and ongoing efficiency efforts. Research into best practices in other states showed that transparent, user-friendly websites can communicate to residents the value of government services, especially from special districts with lesser-known service delivery. A public-facing portal can promote good work, help connect residents with the appropriate staff, and provide interactive maps to help people understand the makeup of their local governments. Potential features could include:

- **Public records.** The site could be an alternative destination for individual entities to post public information, such as financial reports and meeting minutes.
- **Building codes.** Stakeholders expressed interest in compiling and communicating the building codes used throughout the county. A clear directory would help the public, developers, builders, and municipal staff determine what communities share the same codes and what local variations are present. The portal could facilitate service-sharing for inspections and build support for updating codes.
- **Mapping resources.** The site could include easy-to-use maps that can help residents see what districts they live in and navigate overlapping districts. The site could provide more detailed information, such as what services are provided by different districts and contact information. Stakeholders identified confusion about boundaries and jurisdictions as barriers to the efficient provision of services.
- **Opportunities for public engagement.** The site could promote coordination efforts among government districts, as well as host surveys, discussion forums, question-and-answer sessions, and other engagement. Events and activities could occur on a recurring basis or as needed for specific projects.

Case Study: Arkansas Department of Transformation and Shared Services

In 2019, Arkansas created a cabinet-level Department of Transformation and Shared Services (TSS) to improve coordination and create a more efficient state government. Among other initiatives, TSS runs a user-friendly website, transform.ar.gov. The [procurement website](#) hosted on the portal offers a wealth of information in a format that is attractive and easy to navigate. Information is organized for agencies, vendors, and the public. It also includes links to current bid opportunities, state policies, vendor registration, and contact information for procurement staff. The site presents “transformation success stories” that showcase successful initiatives from



various state departments. Other elements of the portal include information on employee benefits, job postings, and online maps and downloadable datasets from the Arkansas Office of Geographic Information Systems.

Case Study: CRCOG Regional Online Permit Center

Connecticut's Capital Region Council of Governments hosts an [online permitting website](#) that allows homeowners and contractors to apply for and track permits, as well as request inspections. Municipal governments can effectively organize and track permits through a centrally managed, cloud-based system contracted through a cooperative. The platform also offers benefits to the public by providing a one-stop resource available at any time. The online permit center streamlines the process for contractors working in multiple communities by providing a single site to conduct the bulk of permitting needs. More than 30 municipalities use the platform.

Recommendation Two: Appoint a county coordinator

A designated point person who can lead implementation of coordinated investment, engage local governments, and build capacity.

Successful implementation of the study's recommendations will require coordinated action by many different government districts. To pursue recommended initiatives and bolster the many ongoing efforts, McHenry County governments should designate a central coordinator. Coordinated investment is best considered as a suite of related programs and projects that complement one another. A single office or staff member who can lead implementation of this study's recommendations allows county stakeholders to engage as many local governments as possible, pursue synergies between programs, and build on lessons learned from different efforts.

A coordinator also will help stakeholders formalize and expand existing coordination. Many individual staff and officials already are driving coordination among different sets of partners, creating working groups, convening meetings, sharing best practices, and reaching out to engage their colleagues in collaborative projects. Their efforts often go above and beyond their already significant job responsibilities. Staff and officials' willingness to drive these projects is a major resource for the count. But the dependence on individual efforts makes them vulnerable to disruption if a staff member retires, moves to another job, or simply becomes too busy to continue outside-the-box projects. Each current and recommended coordination effort may not require a full-time manager, but there is enough work to be done across multiple projects to justify a full-time position.

The coordinator would not just manage several projects but also act as an active agent for capacity building. Because of the cross-cutting knowledge of shared service and coordinated investment opportunities, the coordinator will be able to connect local government partners



with opportunities to improve efficiency and engage small districts that lack the capacity to pursue innovative opportunities on their own.

2.1 Design the position

Local governments could pursue many different strategies to design a position that can coordinate investment and share services throughout McHenry County. This study outlines numerous potential responsibilities for a coordinator. The responsibilities probably are more than one person could realistically oversee. As the study moves into the implementation phase, the advisory committee and other stakeholders should collaborate to narrow the list to a manageable number of high-priority, implementable roles. Further research into emerging programs from other regions can help inform this effort. For example, a new state-funded program in New Jersey is hiring shared-service coordinators at the county level.

The coordinator position will require a diverse skill set and familiarity with the local government framework of Illinois. Professionals with backgrounds in public administration, business management, urban planning, or public policy may be strong candidates. The coordinator should be someone with on-the-ground knowledge of local government operations, whether at a municipality, county, or special district. Ideally, the coordinator should be someone who knows the unique context of McHenry County and can begin implementation with a modest learning curve. In other states, similar positions sometimes have been one-year fellowships or geared toward new professionals. This study recommends appointing an experienced professional to a permanent position, which would allow time to build the recommended programs and seize new opportunities that emerge in the future.

Because the coordinator will be working across multiple levels of government, he or she could be placed in a variety of organizations. Properly designing and placing the coordinator position can help avoid perceptions from partners that the coordinator is operating for one set of stakeholders to the detriment of others. Wherever the coordinator is housed, he or she should be accountable to multiple types of governments. This study recommends establishing a governance structure that allows the county, municipalities, and special districts to have a role in directing the coordinator.

Carefully designing the position will be key to success. With the right set of responsibilities, source of funding, and organizational home base, the coordinator can be seen as a neutral, trusted party who is an expert in government efficiency. Over time, the position should help local governments generate enough efficiencies that it will help pay for itself.

Potential roles for the coordinator include, but are not limited to, the following activities.

2.2 Document and expand existing efforts

The coordinator can promote the documentation, formalization, and expansion of current projects and efforts. In some cases, like the MPI, the coordinator may be able to assist or lead



administration of projects with participation from governments throughout the county and ease the burden on local staff who were handling the projects. In other cases, the coordinator could encourage local leaders to formalize or document their efforts. This work can help ensure projects persist if staff changes and give the county examples of best practices to promote to residents.

2.3 Collect and analyze data

The coordinator should lead the collection of data and information to support shared services and coordinated investment. The study has shown the lack of comprehensive information on government services, assets, equipment, facilities, and personnel hinders efforts to plan for greater coordination. Collecting data and information, similar to this study's inventory, can provide a basis for benchmarking. Collecting this data also will help populate the online portal with useful resources and support efforts to match units of government seeking or offering assistance. The coordinator can analyze collected data to identify potential coordination opportunities among partners.

2.4 Manage coordination portal

The coordination portal will require active management to collect information, engage users, and ensure resources are updated regularly. A coordinator would be ideally suited to perform that role, either directly or with IT staff at whatever organization hosts the site.

2.5 Increase participation

A key finding of the study has been that while governments are implementing many efficiencies and coordination efforts, not all districts have participated. Factors, such as limited staff capacity, lack of awareness of existing efforts, and geographic distance, have contributed to low participation from some districts. The coordinator should engage as many districts as possible and ensure smaller districts with little staff are involved. As more data on the benefits of these programs becomes available, the coordinator can use this information to recruit participants.

2.6 Coordinate grants

Participants in the goal-setting workshops noted that grant writing and reporting was one area they had little capacity to focus on. The project team's research also has shown that multijurisdictional grant applications can be more competitive and can result in more impactful projects. Providing grant writing assistance to every government district would be too large a task to assign to a coordinator. But the coordinator can help facilitate joint applications by identifying opportunities for communities, organizing multijurisdictional applications, and advising on implementation and reporting. This activity can be coordinated with the planning liaison and council of mayors to align with capital planning projects.

Case Study: New Jersey Local Efficiency Achievement Program (LEAP)

New Jersey has pursued different approaches to service sharing and local government efficiency. Those approaches include the provision of state grants and assistance for promising



projects and fellowships for county coordinators. General-purpose districts in New Jersey consist of counties and five different types of incorporated municipalities. New Jersey also features a variety of school district types, local authorities, commissions, and fire districts. Efforts to advance service sharing and cooperation among local governments date back several decades. In recent years, the state has supported local efforts through the Department of Community Affairs' Division of Local Government Services. In 2018, Governor Phil Murphy appointed two former mayors as "czars" to promote shared services.

In 2019, New Jersey created the Local Efficiency Achievement Program (LEAP) to provide financial support and incentives for local innovation in service delivery. LEAP provides local governments with the opportunity to apply for three types of grants that assist with studying and implementing service sharing or consolidation. One type of grant, called Shared Service Coordinator Fellowships, offers each county \$50,000 to hire a young professional for a year to serve as a full-time fellow who identifies service sharing opportunities.

The program is difficult to evaluate since it is so new. But the emphasis on hiring and training a county-level coordinator seems to be a promising model. The project team, however, believes McHenry County would be best served by a coordinator with more experience than emerging professionals who are targeted in New Jersey's LEAP program. The complex issues involved in intergovernmental coordination call for someone who has several years of experience in public administration and government. A longer duration than a one-year fellowship also would allow the coordinator to build momentum for complex projects that may take time to implement, let alone evaluate. It should be noted that the fellowship is not the only way New Jersey counties have funded coordinator positions. Several counties have hired permanent, experienced coordinators through other funding.

Recommendation Three: Facilitate convening and networking

Positioning the county's government districts to respond to new and emerging challenges.

Meetings and events where staff and officials can discuss emerging issues and opportunities are an important foundation for coordinated investment. An overarching goal of this study is to position the county's government districts to respond not just to the concerns at the forefront, but new and emerging challenges as well. For example, recommendations for sharing specific services, based on budget information gathered during this study, likely will be outdated since the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically has changed service demand and local government budgets. However, the types of working groups and networks for intergovernmental collaboration that met during this study can pivot and coordinate activities in light of unforeseen challenges like a post-COVID recovery.



The proposed coordinator will contribute to the county's ability to face new challenges by acting as an established source of advice and matchmaking for local government districts. But given the number of government districts operating in different contexts, a coordinator alone cannot be expected to develop comprehensive knowledge of all their operations. Convening staff and officials in forums that support collaboration will be a critical element to implement this study's goals.

Experience implementing intergovernmental strategies elsewhere in the region drives home the importance of durable networks as a way to meet evolving challenges. Staff from municipalities that created the Lower Fox River Partnering Initiative in 2015 have told CMAP that one of the biggest benefits of the project was the creation of an enduring platform that involved the right people to address emerging priorities.

The McHenry County Coordinated Investment Study already has convened several well-attended workshops, as well as taken advantage of regular meetings with staff and officials to discuss intergovernmental coordination. Attendees have found these opportunities to network and discuss their work helpful and voiced they hope to have more events in the future. They have said these opportunities allow them to learn about what others are doing, broadcast efficiency efforts to their constituents, share skills, and help connect small and geographically remote districts to resources elsewhere in the county.

Existing gatherings provide a foundation for implementation of this study. Besides providing opportunities for joint purchasing, the MPI offers a venue for discussion at monthly meetings, where public works and engineering staff discuss their experience with different contractors, materials, and approaches to common problems. Several administrative roundtables, some more formal than others, also offer opportunities. During these meetings, administrators from overlapping and neighboring districts regularly gather to discuss budgets, planning, and collaboration.

By setting up a series of regular discussions and networking opportunities, McHenry County governments can build on the momentum created by the groups convened during the study.

3.1 Convene implementation working groups

As part of the implementation phase of the study, working groups should be established to advance coordination on specific topics of interest. These groups should consist of eight to 10 key staff and officials who represent a diversity of district types and sizes, geographic locations, and professional expertise. These working groups should meet regularly, possibly quarterly, to refine the study's recommendations into actionable steps that make sense for local governments.



3.2 Organize countywide conventions

Larger meetings also should play a role in helping staff and officials learn from one another. Conventions for all districts, similar to the project workshops, could be held annually. These larger meetings would cut across jurisdictional and topical boundaries and could potentially feature guest speakers, workshops, or trainings. Larger, higher profile events also would make the work visible to constituents.

3.3 Strengthen existing informal networks

The study also recommends bolstering the informal groups that already meet in the county. Many areas with overlapping units of government would benefit from roundtables that offer administrators regular opportunities to discuss their needs and plans. Local governments should seek opportunities to establish similar groups and turn the casual lunches and conversations that administrators share into more formal meetings. Even small amounts of structure, such as naming the group and setting a regular meeting schedule, can help ensure the groups continue into the future, even when new staff and officials, who have not made personal connections with their peers in the area, assume leadership roles.

Case Study: Huntley Area Administrative Round Table

The Huntley Area Administrative Roundtable (HAART) is one example of a more official setting for coordination between many governments within a single community. HAART regularly convenes the administrators of Huntley, Huntley Fire Protection District, Huntley Police Department, Huntley Area Library District, Huntley Park District, Huntley Community School District 158, and the Huntley Chamber of Commerce to discuss opportunities to coordinate. HAART's mission statement sets a goal to "collaboratively strive to align and lead the community's pursuit of excellence through a shared vision for future-oriented planning, innovation, and fiscal responsibility." Many stakeholders reported that because of their strong personal relationships with colleagues in other districts, they have informal meetings to accomplish similar goals. Codifying the membership and goals of these gatherings and setting regular meetings can help advance their goals while ensuring their longevity.

Recommendation Four: Expand joint purchasing

Building on the success of the McHenry County Municipal Partnering Initiative to realize savings on more goods and services among more districts.

Joint purchasing may be the one strategy for intergovernmental coordination that McHenry County government districts have advanced the furthest. Through the MPI and existing purchasing cooperatives, governments have been working to find lower prices and efficiencies through their purchasing activities. This study recommends supporting and building on current initiatives while also exploring new strategies to expand joint purchasing to include a greater range of products and services, as well as a greater number of government districts and district types.



The most effective ways to boost joint purchasing in McHenry County likely are through promoting and expanding the MPI. With a strong, successful group already in place, the county is well positioned to build on current efforts rather than create additional organizations. These recommendations seek to take advantage of the MPI's strengths, add capacity, and expand its services without compromising what it already does well.

4.1 Provide administrative and organizational support

For most of its existence, the MPI has been managed by a small number of municipal staff on behalf of its members. Like many intergovernmental coordination efforts, the initiative has depended on staff leadership. While the dedication and enthusiasm of current staff have been great resources, the arrangement means the MPI is vulnerable to disruption if other commitments or personnel changes divert staff capacity. A small number of government entities lead management of a majority bids in the MPI. This means the administrative burden is not equitably distributed across member communities. The MPI already works with the McHenry County Council of Mayors to secure administrative support, mainly through the council's planning liaison. This arrangement holds great promise and should be the first step toward achieving greater administrative capacity. Over time, if needs grow beyond what the council of mayors can provide, options to work with the county coordinator to achieve greater capacity through the county, council of government, or larger network of local governments may help.

4.2 Pursue outreach to promote joint procurement

Many government districts in McHenry County have been taking advantage of joint procurement opportunities, but stakeholders largely have agreed that more districts could be involved and participating districts could be doing more. Stakeholders expressed interest in promoting the MPI and targeting outreach to municipalities and special districts that have not been heavily involved in existing joint procurement efforts. The county coordinator, the planning liaison, or other staff can conduct outreach to connect more governments with opportunities. The working groups convened during the implementation phase of the project offer a way to discuss with staff from various district types what goods and services to pursue through joint bidding. Future bidding opportunities designed to meet those needs could be an effective way to attract participation from more governments. Conducting outreach to the smaller governments that historically have not participated to find out what would entice them to participate also may provide guidance. Additional capacity through the coordinator and council of mayors also may make this type of targeted outreach easier to perform.

4.3 Seek and develop helpful templates

Staff and officials would like templates to help McHenry County governments standardize their bid language, request for proposals, intergovernmental agreements, contracts, and documentation. These templates could help simplify the administrative needs for the MPI and reassure new participants that documents will meet their own requirements. Staff and officials also could draw on templates and examples from other joint procurement groups could to introduce best practices. The working groups should work with the MPI and other stakeholders



to determine what templates would be helpful and what local requirements present challenges to standardizing forms. The MPI already is working with the McHenry County Division of Transportation to align language in bidding documents and contracts. Additional study will build on this effort.

4.4 Expand to more goods and services

Current joint procurement efforts, particularly the MPI, have focused on transportation and public works materials and services. Entities also have worked together to bid for common, lower-price services and materials that each can use independently. At the goal-setting workshops, participants showed interest in expanding the scope of joint procurement to cover more goods and services. Some possible topics include specialized public works equipment, employee assistance programs, software for permitting and asset management, and staff training resources.

4.5 Integrate planning with purchasing

The MPI and other joint procurement efforts can help achieve greater efficiency and by providing a forum for coordination of services, infrastructure, and other public investment. The MPI also addresses materials and services related to infrastructure work. Multiple communities could pursue that part of the MPI for efficiencies. Member governments may be able to coordinate their planning up front and integrate it into request for proposals to save money for their constituents. In the future, interested staff and officials should make coordinated planning a central part of joint purchasing and incorporate recommendations from pavement management plans.

Recommendation Five: Support collaborative planning

Increase collaborative planning to identify future projects and opportunities for service sharing, and improve competitiveness for funding.

To maximize the benefits of intergovernmental coordination, government districts should seek opportunities to align their planning activities. Even without coordinated planning, governments potentially can reduce costs and gain efficiency by contracting or sharing services and pursuing joint procurement. But based on conversations with stakeholders and understanding of national best practices, the benefits will be most powerful when governments pursue these practices through increased collaboration in planning activities. Increased collaborative planning will make it easier for staff and officials from different districts to identify future projects, increase opportunities for service sharing, and improve competitiveness for funding.

Staff and officials who attended the goal-setting workshops emphasized the importance of strategic planning to unlock opportunities and help make the public case for the benefits of



coordination. Attendees stressed the value of processes that find common ground in the long-range visions of multiple units of government and provide a foundation for ongoing partnerships. Attendees also discussed how more formal planning processes can involve key decision-makers who may not otherwise have time to devote to voluntary working groups. Stakeholders also discussed the difficulty that small and lower-capacity entities encounter when conducting their own long-range strategic planning. Including such districts in a multijurisdictional planning process may increase their capacity and connect them to opportunities, such as joint grant applications. While implementing this study, local governments should maximize the benefits of collaborative planning by continuing to bring together working groups and positioning them to remain active after the study concludes.

5.1 Advance strategic planning

Staff and officials from some communities discussed past experience with joint long-range planning efforts and how those efforts effectively convened a variety of districts that serve the same area. Long-range planning that brings together municipalities, townships, road districts, park districts, school districts, and emergency service providers can be a powerful complement to regular roundtables for districts to discuss day-to-day operations and shorter-term projects. Strategic planning, whether in the context of a comprehensive plan or a separate strategic plan, offers the opportunity to develop a unified vision for future development and service provision among overlapping and neighboring districts. A planning process gives staff, officials, residents, and business leaders the opportunity to share and discuss what they are seeing and expecting regarding shifts in population, technology, and the local business environment. The more that districts proactively address these trends, the easier it will be for entities that are in the best position to step in. Municipal governments, which typically lead comprehensive planning efforts, should make sure they engage staff and officials from districts that provide services to residents and businesses within their jurisdiction.

Case Study: Hazard mitigation planning

McHenry County formed a multijurisdictional Natural Hazard Mitigation Committee in 2008 and adopted its initial Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) in 2010. The HMP is reviewed every year for changes and updates to action items. A full update to the plan also happens every five years. The most recent [full update](#) was drafted from 2015 to 2017 and adopted by resolution in 2017.

The multijurisdictional nature of creating and implementing the HMP strengthens a sub-regional network of local governments, including municipalities and special districts, for the purpose of hazard mitigation. Stakeholders engaged through the study have discussed their interest in expanding the kind of coordination that occurs as part of emergency response. The network established for the HMP possibly could be a strong component of ongoing coordinated investment efforts beyond hazard planning. The multi-year update process, as well as the plan's recommendations, should be assessed for opportunities to link to other multijurisdictional efforts recommended in this study. Additionally, the efficacy of plan implementation and full



participation of units of government should be assessed. The group also should identify opportunities to improve participation and facilitate completion of more planned mitigation efforts through coordination.

Finally, the group should consider whether coordinated response and resilience through hazards, such as the COVID-19 crisis, should be considered through this process, another existing county program, or a new mechanism.

5.2 Align capital planning

Pursuing greater coordination in capital planning can help districts achieve greater efficiency in implementing their own projects, while opening the door to more ambitious joint projects. Greater understanding of the nature and timeline of neighbors' projects can help districts time their own work more effectively, as well as potentially reduce costs and disruption to residents and businesses. Not every local government completes a capital improvement plan. When they do, neighboring and overlapping governments do not always consult nearby plans to identify conflicting or complementary projects. More widespread adoption of capital improvements plans and alignment of planning cycles would help municipalities, road districts, and McHenry County Division of Transportation find ways to implement important capital projects efficiently and build momentum for future joint bids.

Coordinating capital planning also can help communities access funds for projects that would be difficult to secure on their own. During the study's engagement process, officials from township road districts asked how they can access more federal transportation funds that CMAP programs. Multijurisdictional planning can help entities compete for funding by identifying a set of related projects that collectively are both large and impactful

Local governments should consider strategies for boosting coordinated capital planning. Simply collecting capital improvement plans for the online portal will clarify what governments have adopted plans and their timelines. This information would make it easier for governments that wish to coordinate and see what and when their neighbors are planning. The county coordinator position can facilitate coordination efforts, as well. The MPI could be an additional venue for discussing coordinated capital planning since bids and contracts related to infrastructure may be considered. Specific projects, such as introducing broadband infrastructure, might be especially strong candidates for joint planning.

Another aspect of capital planning for further study is pavement management. Staff and officials from a variety of districts discussed the need for more coordination and standardization of pavement ratings. Many expressed interest in joining forces to evaluate and rate their streets. During the implementation phase, the project team will consult with working groups to discuss lessons learned and ideas for collaboration stemming from CMAP's involvement in pavement management planning.



Case Study: Improvements to Roosevelt Road

In 2011, the municipalities of Oak Park, Berwyn, and Cicero cooperated on a multijurisdictional effort to improve Roosevelt Road. State and federal funds were used for road reconstruction and streetscape improvements, including benches, planters, and decorative lighting. The three communities worked together to develop a uniform aesthetic for the “road diet” across their jurisdictional boundaries, resulting in a safer, coherent corridor that looked more attractive to potential businesses. Initial funding for the project included at least \$4 million awarded from Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP), \$2 million from IDOT, and \$2.5 million from the three municipalities. Following the infrastructure improvements, the communities collaborated on business recruitment for the corridor. The multijurisdictional nature of the project not only allowed the communities to access a larger amount of public funding, but also to attract private investment with regional benefits.

Recommendation Six: Initiate pilot projects

Specific projects that address priorities staff and officials identified during stakeholder engagement.

Given the complexity of countywide coordinated investment, this study primarily focuses on building a foundation for ongoing collaboration between local governments. It is beyond the scope of a single study to collect all the data and input necessary to determine the best organization and division of responsibilities among all McHenry County governments. Instead, the study focuses on equipping local governments with recommendations that advance coordination among themselves and meet challenges as they emerge. Still, during stakeholder engagement, staff and officials identified a set of specific projects that address priorities. Pursuing these projects will serve a number of goals. They will provide an opportunity to strengthen the relationships formed by the study’s working groups, which should provide a forum for ongoing collaboration. These projects also can help monitor savings or improvements to service delivery, and provide justification for pursuing additional projects.

A variety of projects emerged as candidates for further exploration. The study’s working groups will discuss in more detail the projects that seem to be the strongest candidates for quick, successful deployment.

6.1 Create an online map repository

As explained in the coordination portal section of this memo, many stakeholders see benefits in providing maps that clarify boundaries and jurisdictions for different audiences. The McHenry County Geographic Information Systems Department could create a series of maps that can be integrated into current or future web resources that will make it easier for staff, officials, and the general public to determine the right entity to contact. Helpful online maps could include district boundaries, road maintenance responsibility, and other services.



6.2 Identify shared service subareas

Conversations at the goal-setting workshops about sharing certain public services revolved around identifying geographically efficient service areas that could better match residents and businesses with services located near them. The theme of these discussions was the geographically efficient way to provide a service does not always match the jurisdictional boundaries of the districts that provide the services. Establishing new geographic service areas is a complicated process. It would require cooperation among elected officials, staff, and other stakeholders, including employee collective bargaining units that represent workers who would be affected by changes to service boundaries. The study's working groups can serve as forums to build trust with these parties by including them in developing the strategy.

Stakeholders identified snowplowing as a priority pilot project. Unlike other road work, which can be scheduled far in advance, plowing must be quickly done following winter storms. The lack of predictability makes having optimally located equipment and supplies a major advantage. Several stakeholders believe townships or municipalities could plow county roads that overlap with their boundaries and are far from the McHenry County Division of Transportation's garages. In some cases, entities already plow small sections of another district's roads through formal agreements or informal understandings. Attempts to create a more comprehensive approach to efficient plowing have been unsuccessful. A working group can explore the topic, using maps to facilitate important discussions about the level of service. This also could help spur discussions about other cooperative road maintenance and service provision. A pilot project about the benefits of shared snowplowing also would be visible to the public. Throughout the engagement process, county, municipal, and township stakeholders emphasized that road users usually do not know the entity responsible for maintaining a particular stretch of road and often do not care. They simply want the road cleared when needed. This pilot would help make that happen.

6.3 Identify shared staffing and human resources opportunities

At the goal-setting workshops, administrators from a variety of government districts described related challenges in managing human resources. Some areas that could be pursued include coordination of contracts for shared trainings, shared employee assistance programs, and joint purchasing of health insurance. Strategies for coordinating hiring of shared part-time and seasonal staff, including what kinds of intergovernmental agreements and insurance might be required, also may be helpful.

6.4 Identify information technology coordination opportunities

Stakeholders identified some specific IT needs for the study to explore, in addition to the general resources for training and software that the portal and coordinator position can provide. Stakeholders reported growing demands for document and records management. Records storage and document digitization are growing needs for all types of governments, particularly ones that receive a large volume of FOIA requests. Models for centralized support for the document and records needs of local governments may be beneficial in the future.



Case Study: Connecticut IT Services Cooperative

Connecticut's Capital Region Council of Governments offers local governments a range of programs through the [IT Services Cooperative](#). While the primary users are municipal members of the council, any Connecticut municipality, board of education, library, or other public entity can take advantage of its services. Joint procurement of IT services and products is a primary function of the cooperative. Besides lowering costs for participating governments, the cooperative coordinates feedback and evaluation between members and vendors to improve programs and offerings. Current programs the cooperative offers include cloud hosting, fiber infrastructure services, cybersecurity, and the online permitting program highlighted under Recommendation One.

Recommendation Seven: Coordinate policy and advocacy

Identifying consensus policy goals to empower local government coordination.

This study focuses on ways government districts in McHenry County can act to streamline intergovernmental coordination and increase efficiency. During workshops, advisory committee meetings, and stakeholder interviews, partners emphasized the importance of focusing on local actions that could succeed without depending on the state. But changes to consolidation referenda in 2019 and 2020 offered a reminder that action at the state level influences the ways local officials, staff, and voters can pursue intergovernmental coordination. The following goals reflect common feelings among stakeholders who can advocate for policies that empower government districts to deepen their collaboration and share services. These goals are only a snapshot of current issues. Other priorities likely will emerge in the future. In keeping with the study's overall approach, the recommended platforms for convening and collaborating can provide a foundation for rallying local governments to communicate with one another about potential advocacy needs that arise after the study concludes.

7.1 Advocate for funding to adequately study consolidation opportunities

While consolidation has not been a priority for stakeholders engaged through the first three phases of the study, it remains a major topic of discussion. At the outset of this study, the project team anticipated that consolidation would be a strategy many stakeholders would wish to pursue. While participants expressed support for consolidation in the abstract, they did not agree on what local governments should pursue consolidation or the best way to approach it. This uncertainty led to a lack of momentum behind pursuing consolidation as a major component of current coordinated investment efforts. Past attempts to consolidate townships and road districts, both through referenda in 2020 and through the McHenry County Board's Township Consolidation Task Force in 2015, have not resulted in mergers. Consolidation is not always the right solution. The outcomes of these efforts simply may reflect that these particular situations did not justify consolidation. It is possible, however, that the lack of success suggests



potential areas where state action could more effectively promote mergers that are supported locally.

The consolidation referenda that voters in Nunda and McHenry Townships defeated in March 2020 highlighted some of the risks current laws present to the continuity of desired services. Faced with the potential of assuming a township’s responsibilities within as little as 90 days, the county was forced to quickly plan for how to provide some additional services and potentially eliminate others at a mandated lower level of revenue from the affected areas. The law does not require the completion of a cost-benefit analysis, meaning voters lacked information on how consolidation would affect their level of service. Local governments could advocate for process improvements, including the requirement to conduct transparent studies prior to referenda and funding from the state to support these studies.

Case Study: New Jersey efficiency program

New Jersey’s Local Efficiency Achievement Program offers a model for state funding of innovative shared-service initiatives. With an initial allocation of \$10 million in state funds, the program offers three types of grant to assist local governments with ambitious ideas for coordinated investment. “Challenge Grants” allocate funds to projects proposed by at least two partnering units of local government in each county that produce significant efficiency through service sharing. The program gives preference to innovative projects that can be scaled up or replicated. “Innovation Grants” are designed to cover costs incurred when implementing shared services, such as new technology, equipment, vehicles, and training. “Implementation Grants” also can be used to study school district consolidation. The third type of grant funds coordinator fellowships, as discussed in Recommendation Two.

Because the program only has existed since 2019, it is difficult to evaluate its effectiveness. Grant support for study and implementation would help local governments address some of the coordination barriers that stakeholders identified during this study. Many participants saw the potential for increased efficiency through software and equipment purchases, but the start-up cost seemed prohibitive and difficult to structure in an equitable way among governments with varied resources and capacity. A grant program from Illinois could help smooth the distributions of costs while saving money in the long run.

7.2 Develop education and communications tools

Staff and officials from many different types of local governments reported that data and information about local government operations, budgets, and coordination efforts would help them communicate with their constituents. Maps, infographics, best practices, and talking points may be helpful. Local governments may wish to explore the creation of platforms for communication with constituents, such as using the public-facing side of the portal as a way to advance transparency.



Implementation

Based on strategies identified within each section of the study, CMAP will work with the McHenry County Council of Governments, McHenry County, and the advisory committee to identify agencies and organizations that can lead efforts on each recommendation. In addition to the council and McHenry County, the implementing agencies and organizations will include, but not be limited to, municipal governments, special districts, state legislators, intergovernmental organizations, and CMAP. The purpose of naming lead agencies is to identify entities responsible for implementing an element of the plan. It will be important to include organizations that are not actively involved, so they can become familiar with the relevant recommendations of the plan before it is released. CMAP will work with the council, McHenry County, and the advisory committee on reaching ideal implementers, as needed.

This study's working groups and workshops should become the platform for implementation. The study team will assist the county coordinator position in working with the advisory committee to design future phases of workshops and focus groups to most effectively set them up for successful implementation.

The study envisions the establishment of three initial working groups. One will focus on the design and initiation of the online coordination portal. A second will lead implementation of joint purchasing strategies that build on the existing network and success of the MPI. The third working group will be dedicated to coordinating future planning activities. As new issues come to the fore in the coming months and years, local partners may choose to convene additional working groups that can respond to pressing opportunities.



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Implementation Table

Recommendation One: Establish a coordination portal				
Action	Timeline ³	Lead(s)	Partners	Notes
1.1 Create a government site	Medium-term	Coordination Portal Workgroup	McHenry County; MCCG; MCCOM	The workgroup should lead planning, but a different partner may lead hosting and maintaining the site.
1.2 Create a public site	Medium-term	Coordination Portal Workgroup	McHenry County; MCCG; MCCOM	
Recommendation Two: Appoint a county coordinator				
Action	Timeline	Lead(s)	Partners	Notes
2.1 Design the position	Short-term	MCCG, McHenry County	CMAF	
2.2 Document and expand existing efforts	Short-term	MCCG, McHenry County	MCCOM; MPI	
2.3 Collect and analyze data	Short-term	MCCG, McHenry County	MCCOM	
2.4 Manage coordination portal	Medium-term	MCCG, McHenry County	MCCOM; MPI	
2.5 Increase participation	Short-term	MCCG	MCCOM; MPI	
2.6 Coordinate grants	Short-term	MCCG	MCCOM; MPI	
Recommendation Three: Facilitate convening and networking				
Action	Timeline	Lead(s)	Partners	Notes
3.1 Convene implementation working groups	Short-term	MCCG	McHenry County; MCCOM	The initial three working groups can focus on the portal, joint purchasing, and planning coordination.
3.2 Organize countywide conventions	Medium-term	MCCG	McHenry County; MCCOM; MPI; CMAF	
3.3 Strengthen existing informal networks	Short-term	MCCG	MCCOM; MPI	
Recommendation Four: Expand joint purchasing				
Action	Timeline	Lead(s)	Partners	Notes

³ Short-term projects are expected to occur within two years of study completion. Medium-term projects should occur between year two and year five.

4.1 Provide administrative and organizational support	Short-term	Joint Purchasing Workgroup	MCCG; McHenry County; MPI
4.2 Pursue outreach to promote joint procurement	Short-term	Joint Purchasing Workgroup	MCCG; McHenry County; MPI
4.3 Seek and develop helpful templates	Medium-term	Joint Purchasing Workgroup	MCCG; McHenry County; MPI
4.4 Expand to more goods and services	Medium-term	Joint Purchasing Workgroup	MCCG; McHenry County; MPI
4.5 Integrate planning with purchasing	Short-term	Joint Purchasing Workgroup, Planning Coordination Workgroup	MCCOM; MCCG; McHenry County; MPI; CMAP

Recommendation Five: Support collaborative planning

Action	Timeline	Lead(s)	Partners	Notes
5.1 Advance strategic planning	Short-term	Planning Coordination Workgroup	MCCG; MCCOM; MCCG; CMAP	
5.2 Align capital planning	Short-term	Planning Coordination Workgroup	MCCG; MCCOM; MCCG	

Recommendation Six: Initiate pilot projects

Action	Timeline	Lead(s)	Partners	Notes
6.1 Create an online map repository	Short-term	McHenry County	MCCOM; MCCG	
6.2 Identify shared service subareas	Short-term	Planning Coordination Workgroup	MCCG; McHenry County; MPI; MCCOM	Conducting outreach to affected jurisdictions (e.g., road districts for snow removal) will be a crucial task of this working group.
6.3 Identify shared staffing and human resources opportunities	Medium-term	MCCG	McHenry County; MPI	
6.4 Identify information technology coordination opportunities.	Short-term	Joint Purchasing Workgroup	MCCG; MPI	

Recommendation Seven: Coordinate policy and advocacy

Action	Timeline	Lead(s)	Partners	Notes
7.1 Advocate for funding to adequately study consolidation opportunities	Medium-term	MCCG	McHenry County; CMAP; Non-profits	Partners from other counties may be able to support these efforts.
7.2 Develop education and communications tools	Medium-term	MCCG	McHenry County; MCCOM	

Appendix A: Coordinated investment study participants

The following staff, officials, and residents participated in the McHenry County Coordinated Investment Study through the advisory committee, focus groups, or goal-setting workshops.

McHenry County

Edward Amoo, Senior GIS Analyst, McHenry County

Pete Austin, County Administrator, McHenry County

Karin Dietz, Assistant Finance Director, McHenry County

Nicole Gattuso, Director of GIS, McHenry County

Scott Hartman, Deputy County Administrator, McHenry County

Joe Korpalski, County Engineer, McHenry County

Adam Letendre, Purchasing Director, McHenry County

Alicia Schueller, Assistant to the County Administrator, McHenry County

Tom Sullivan, Director of IT, McHenry County

Scott Hennings, Principal Transportation Planner, McHenry County Division of Transportation

Ben Justen, Shop Supervisor, McHenry County Division of Transportation

Ed Markison, Maintenance Superintendent, McHenry County Division of Transportation

Ben Redding, Design Manager, McHenry County Division of Transportation

Beth Skowronski, Assistant Maintenance Superintendent, McHenry County Division of Transportation

Jeff Young, former Assistant County Engineer, McHenry County Division of Transportation

David Christensen, Director, McHenry County Emergency Management Agency

Dennis Sandquist, Planning and Development Director, McHenry County Planning and Development

Adam Wallen, Deputy Director and Building Enforcement Officer, McHenry County Planning and Development

Aimée Knop, Sheriff's Deputy, McHenry County Sheriff's Office

Jeremy Morris, Emergency Services Dispatch Supervisor, McHenry County Sheriff's Office

Bill Prim, County Sheriff, McHenry County Sheriff's Office

Rob Richardson, Fleet Supervisor, McHenry County Sheriff's Office

McHenry County Conservation District

Andy Dylak, Director of Finance and Administration, McHenry County Conservation District

Elizabeth Kessler, Executive Director, McHenry County Conservation District

Laura L.V. King, Chief of Police, McHenry County Conservation District Police

Perry Weborg, Fleet Manager, McHenry County Conservation District



McHenry County Council of Governments

Chalen Daigle, Executive Director, McHenry County Council of Governments

Municipalities

Paul DeRaedt, Fire Rescue Chief, Crystal Lake Fire Department

James Black, Police Chief, Crystal Lake Police Department

Eric Helm, Deputy City Manager, Crystal Lake

George Koczwara, Former Director of Finance, Crystal Lake

Michael Magnuson, Director of Public Works, Crystal Lake

Gary Mayerhofer, City Manager, Crystal Lake

Michelle Rentzsch, Director of Community Development, Crystal Lake

Tyson Bauman, Deputy Chief of Police, Harvard Police Department

Jim Kruckenberg, Public Works Superintendent, Harvard

Dave Nelson, City Administrator, Harvard

Steve Santeler, Community Development Director, Harvard

Joshua Blakemore, City Administrator, Marengo

Doug Martin, Director of Economic Development, McHenry

Derik Morefield, City Manager, McHenry

John Lieb, Chief of Police, Woodstock Police Department

Paul Christensen, Finance Director/Assistant City Manager, Woodstock

Aaron Grosskopf, Street Superintendent, Woodstock

Roscoe C. Stelford, III, City Manager, Woodstock

Jeff Sutrick, Deputy Chief of Police, Algonquin Police Department

Kevin Crook, Chief Innovation Officer, Algonquin

Russ Farnum, Community Development Director, Algonquin

Jerry Glogowski, Trustee, Algonquin

Michael Kumbera, Assistant Village Manager, Algonquin

Ben Mason, Senior Planner, Algonquin

Tim Schloneger, Village Manager, Algonquin

Anna Paul, Director of Administration, Barrington Hills

Emily Berendt, Village President, Bull Valley

Mark Kersten, Trustee, Bull Valley

Patrick Finlon, Chief of Police, Cary Police Department

Scott Naydenoff, Deputy Chief of Police, Cary Police Department

John Fitch, Building and Zoning Official, Cary

Steven Kopacz, Public Works Superintendent, Cary

Erik Morimoto, Director of Public Works/Village Engineer, Cary

Jake Rife, Village Administrator, Cary

Courtney Sage, Management Analyst, Cary

Brian Simmons, Community Development Director, Cary

John Stein, Assistant Director of Public Works, Cary

Anne Marrin, Village Administrator, Fox Lake



Derek Soderholm, Village Administrator, Fox River Grove
Todd Fulton, Deputy Chief of Police, Huntley Police Department
Darin Allison, Operations Supervisor, Huntley
Lisa Armour, Deputy Village Manager, Huntley
Cathy Haley, Director of Finance, Huntley
David J. Johnson, Village Manager, Huntley
Kenny Von Allmen, Chief of Police, Johnsburg Police Department
Beckey Kijak, Village Accountant, Johnsburg
Vinny LaMontagna, Assistant Village Administrator, Johnsburg
Claudett Peters, Village Administrator, Johnsburg
Dave Brey, Chief of Police, Lake in the Hills Police Department
Mary Frake, Deputy Chief of Police, Lake in the Hills Police Department
Jennifer Clough, former Village Administrator, Lake in the Hills
Shane Johnson, former Assistant Village Administrator /Finance Director, Lake in the Hills
Dan Kaup, former Director of Public Works, Lake in the Hills
Fred Mullard, Community Services Director, Lake in the Hills
Justin Piessens, IT Manager, Lake in the Hills
Todd Richardson, former Police Chief, Lakewood Police Department
Jeannine Smith, Chief Administrative Officer, Lakewood
Gary Zickuhr, Public Utilities Water Operator, Lakewood
Lori Prehn, Deputy Village Clerk, McCullom Lake
Craig Kunz, Village President, Richmond
Jon Schmitt, Director of Public Works, Richmond
Bob Walczak, Building and Zoning Officer, Spring Grove

Fire districts

Algonquin Fire Protection District
Cary Fire Protection District
Crystal Lake Rural Fire Protection District
Fox River Grove Fire Protection District
Hebron-Alden-Greenwood Fire Protection District
Huntley Fire Protection District
Marengo Fire Protection District
McHenry Township Fire Protection District
Nunda Rural Fire Protection District
Richmond Township Fire Protection District
Spring Grove Fire Protection District
Wonder Lake Fire Protection District
Woodstock Fire/Rescue District



Library districts

Sara Murray, Director, Algonquin Area Library District
Karen Long, Assistant Director, Cary Area Public Library
Diane McNulty, Executive Director, Cary Area Public Library
Karen Migaldi, Assistant Director, Crystal Lake Public Library
Nicole Steeves, Director, Fox River Grove Library
Bill Edminster, Assistant Director, McHenry Public Library

Park districts

Dan Jones, Executive Director, Cary Park District
Vicki Krueger, Director of Finance, Cary Park District
Katrina Hanna, Superintendent of Business Services, Crystal Lake Park District
Jason Herbster, Executive Director, Crystal Lake Park District
Erik Jakubowski, Superintendent of Park Services, Crystal Lake Park District
Kurt Reckamp, Superintendent of Recreation Program and Facility Services, Crystal Lake Park District
Thom Palmer, Executive Director, Huntley Park District
Joe Vallez, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, Marengo Park District

School districts

Jeremy Davis, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations, CHSD 155
Dave Jenkins, Assistant Superintendent of Technology, Crystal Lake CCSD 47
Cathy Nelson, Assistant Superintendent of Business, Crystal Lake CCSD 47
Mike Prombo, CFO, Harvard CUSD 50
Doug Renkosik, Director of Operations and Maintenance, Huntley CSD 158
Deb Salm, Director of Fiscal Services, Huntley CSD 158
Daniel Johnson, Superintendent, Johnsburg CUSD 12
Annie Mulvaney, Business Manager, Johnsburg CUSD 12
Dan Kane, Network Administrator, Marengo CHSD 154
Heather Shepard, Business Manager, Marengo CHSD 154
Kevin Werner, Chief School Business Official, Prairie Grove CSD 46
Christine Conkling, Superintendent, Riley CCSD 18

Road and bridge districts

Bart Schnulle, Highway Commissioner, Alden Township Road and Bridge District
Don Staver, Highway Commissioner, Chemung Township Road and Bridge District
Dave Nolan, Highway Commissioner, Dunham Township Road and Bridge District
Don Goad, Highway Commissioner, Greenwood Township Road and Bridge District
Mike Murray, Highway Commissioner, Hartland Township Road and Bridge District
Zeke Nickels, Highway Commissioner, Hebron Township Road and Bridge District
Jake Adamson, Highway Commissioner, Marengo Township Road and Bridge District
James Condon, Highway Commissioner, McHenry Township Road District
Mike Lesperance, Highway Commissioner, Nunda Township Road and Bridge District



AC Rosie, Nunda Township Road and Bridge District

David Diamond, Highway Commissioner, Riley Township Road and Bridge District

Townships

Sam Jones, Supervisor, Burton Township

Roger Naylor, Supervisor, Coral Township

Sue Brokow, Supervisor, Dorr Township

Barb Klasen, Supervisor, Greenwood Township

John Burns, Supervisor, Marengo Township

Craig Adams, Supervisor, McHenry Township

Lee Jennings, Supervisor, Nunda Township

Paul Hain, Supervisor, Richmond Township

Chris Gumm, Roadway Commissioner, Richmond Township Road District

James Kagel, Supervisor, Seneca Township

Karen Schnable, Supervisor, Riley Township (also Business Manager of Riley CCSD 18)

Other

Don Burr, Deputy Director, Southeast Emergency Communications (SEMCO)



Appendix B: Studies from outside the region

In the early stages of the McHenry County Coordinated Investment Study, the project team examined recent county-level shared services and coordinated investment studies from communities in New York and California. These studies showed that the local government ecosystem in each state is unique, and can best be understood in its own location-specific context.

California

Several shared-services initiatives have been implemented in California at both the county and regional scale. Since 1963, Local Agency Formation Commissions, or LAFCOs, have been responsible for most shared services work in the state. These regional agencies are responsible for overseeing the organization, expansion, consolidation, and dissolution of local governments within their jurisdiction. To carry out this work, LAFCOs are given both regulatory and planning authority to manage growth, development, and ongoing service provision.

LAFCOs are well-situated to perform this work, in part, because they are structured as third-party entities that are not directly representative of a specific government or type of government during negotiations. According to the Campbell Public Affairs Institute at Syracuse University, this arrangement allows them to avoid internal barriers to service sharing. It provided a good model for how the McHenry County team approached the project.

There is no consistent methodology used by all LAFCOs. Instead, each agency customizes their approach to local conditions. Much of their work focuses on coordinating communication between governing bodies and bringing together stakeholders around a common interest in efficient, responsive government. This is often done through in-person meetings and periodic surveys to identify what services are being provided, which entities provide them, and if there are any opportunities for joint purchases, shared services, or additional collaboration.

In 2017, the Little Hoover Commission, the independent state oversight agency in California, published a comprehensive report on the status of special districts in the state and made several recommendations to the state government regarding improvements to their performance. Specifically, the report found many special districts were doing important work, often in a significantly more efficient manner than was previously believed. This hinted at a need for greater transparency, which the commission suggested could be accomplished by creating more user-friendly websites. The commission also found numerous instances of inactive or underperforming special districts that continue to function because the area's LAFCO did not have funds to hold the public referendum needed to disband or consolidate the district. To address this issue, the commission recommended giving LAFCOs the authority to disband inactive districts through administrative processes—rather than an expensive referendum—and the creation of a one-time grant for implementing specific LAFCO projects (including consolidations, mergers, and referenda).



New York

In 2017, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo created the County-Wide Shared Services Initiative (CWSSI) to reduce property taxes and lower the cost of local government statewide. Local government in New York is organized into counties, towns, and municipalities, a broadly similar system to Illinois' counties, townships, and municipalities, although without as many special purpose districts. The 2017 law required each New York county (outside of New York City) to convene a panel of all municipal leadership and submit a Shared Services and Property Tax Savings Plan to the New York Department of State. To create further incentives for cooperation, New York offered a one-time cash match for all demonstrated cost savings resulting from implementing recommendations identified by counties' plans.

The first step in the development of a Property Tax Savings Plan is to assemble a Shared Services Panel. At a minimum, the panel consists of the mayor of each city or village in the county and the supervisor of each town. Representatives of school districts, boards of education, and special districts also are permitted to serve on the panel, but participation is typically low for these groups. More often, these groups serve in a stakeholder/advisor capacity.

The development of the plan itself is typically managed by county staff and involves numerous opportunities for input by the Shared Services Panel and the general public. Once the draft plan has been completed, it must undergo a public review process before it is submitted to the Shared Services Panel for approval. Once the document is approved, the plan is presented to the public and submitted to New York officials.

The Property Tax Savings plans themselves begin with a brief overview of the county, including general economic, demographic, and geographic characteristics, as well as a discussion the various governments active in the area. Following this overview, the plans present a topic-by-topic analysis of potential savings through shared services and coordinated investments. Each example includes an estimate for how much money could be saved in the short and long term. The total potential savings from each action then is totaled, resulting in a final savings estimate for the plan.

Elements of New York's program informed choices in scope and methods for the McHenry County Coordinated Investment Study. Based on research and primary interviews with officials involved in New York's program, the project team identified strengths and weaknesses of the effort. While the county scale was found to be a good match for McHenry County's needs, New York's focus on municipal governments left gaps in the analysis and recommendations. The initiative invited only municipalities to participate in their panels, and the involved municipalities were represented in brainstorming sessions only by their top elected official. Based on interviews with New York participants, it was clear that involving staff would not only generate feasible recommendations, but also create goodwill and buy-in among the people who would be implementing the plans. In designing the McHenry County study, the project



team expanded participation by inviting all types of local government districts and engaging key staff throughout the process.

New York has seen little successful implementation of plans that were submitted in 2017. Stakeholders largely attributed the lack of implementation to the limited participation in plan creation. The state granted panels extensions and allowed them to amend original plans in 2018, based on lessons learned from the initial attempt. For plans created in 2020, more substantive changes were made to involve more entities and relevant staff to improve plan quality and likelihood of implementation.



Appendix C: Local government legal and regulatory framework

A complicated state regulatory framework strongly influences the relationship between municipalities, counties, and special districts. Laws and regulations dictate the roles, powers, and responsibilities of different government districts and influence how they can collaborate with one another. In recent years, Illinois has made several notable revisions to the statutes governing how units of local government may be consolidated or dissolved. The intent of these revisions was to streamline the process for making structural changes to local governments, with a stated goal of improving government efficiency.

County oversight of certain local governments

In 2019, Illinois lawmakers approved a revision to the Counties Code to provide counties with between 300,000 and 2,000,000 residents (which includes McHenry County) with the authority to obtain financial information from any unit of local government that has a board to which the county appoints the majority of members. The law specifically empowers counties to request information pertaining to the unit of government's finances, budget, contracts, employment, and ethics policies.

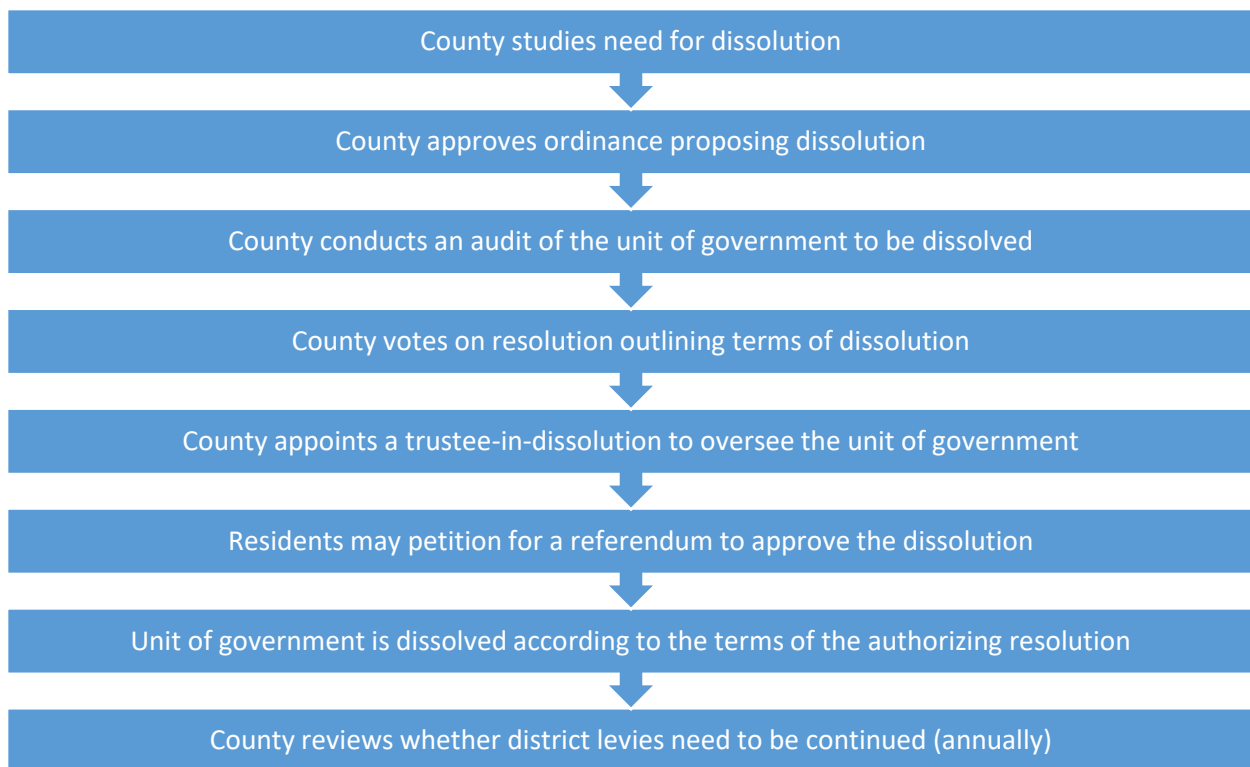
DuPage County has used its oversight powers to pursue changes to special districts in recent years. The county board chairman used the new oversight authority to gain a better understanding of special districts affiliated with DuPage County. This review became the first step in a broader program, known as the DuPage ACT (Accountability/Consolidation/Transparency) Initiative, which led to significant efforts to improve government efficiency across several units of government. By first examining the financial health of certain special districts, the county made more educated decisions about the future of local governments and acted as better stewards of public funds. Changes implemented through the DuPage ACT include the elimination of several "paper districts" that existed mostly to collect revenue for services provided by other entities, including several sanitary districts, street lighting districts, and fire protection districts. The program has led to an increase in service sharing and the adoption of new revenue collection models to provide continuation of services, such as the introduction of new special service areas.

Local government reduction and efficiency (*revision to Counties Code*)

Following a pilot project in DuPage County, Illinois revised the Counties Code to establish a clear process for counties to dissolve certain types of local government units. Specifically, the revised statute grants counties the authority to dissolve units of government located wholly within one county, and that have boards with a majority of members appointed by the county. Notably, conservation districts, mental health boards, fire protection districts with regular, full-time employees, and any districts created under the Community Care for Persons with Development Disabilities Act are exempt from the statute.



As established in the law, the process for a county to dissolve a qualifying unit of government begins when a county board passes an ordinance proposing the dissolution of a specific district. The ordinance must contain an estimate of the cost savings that would be generated by the dissolution, and be published online and in a local newspaper. Once the ordinance has been passed, the county then conducts an audit of the unit of government to further study if the dissolution will benefit taxpayers. Following the audit, a county board may choose to pass an ordinance officially authorizing the unit's dissolution. If the ordinance passes, the county will then appoint a trustee-in-dissolution who will replace the governing board of the unit of government for the remainder of the unit's existence. During this period, residents living within the service area of the unit of government being disbanded may submit a petition calling for a binding resolution on the unit's dissolution to be placed on the next general election ballot. If no petition is received, or if the subsequent referendum approves the dissolution, the unit of government will be dissolved according to the terms outlined in the authorizing ordinance.



After a unit of government has been dissolved through this process, a county board may pursue any of several options to continue providing services previously provided by the dissolved unit of government. One option is for a municipality to establish a special service area with boundaries that align with those of the dissolved unit of government. For example, when the DuPage County Board dissolved the North Westmont Fire Protection District in 2018, the



village of Westmont created a special service area to collect revenue for fire protection.¹ If a special service area is established, the county may serve as the body's governing board, or allow an adjacent or overlapping municipality to serve that function. Another option is for the county to assume the service responsibilities that the dissolved district previously met. DuPage County pursued this option following the consolidation of the Century Hill Street Lighting District, transferring service responsibilities the DuPage County Division of Transportation.² Finally, counties also may choose to discontinue non-mandatory functions of the dissolved unit of government, including the administration of general assistance, maintenance and operation of cemeteries, and township level assessments.

Under this statute, within six months of the initial dissolution of the district, and annually thereafter, the county must evaluate whether any levies enacted by the former district should be abated.

Public Act 100-0107

This law creates a path for counties and voters to consolidate or dissolve townships and road districts. The law removed the requirement that counties without townships have a commission form of government. The legislation also removed the cap on the geographic size of townships, allowing for neighboring townships to merge. It also created processes for road districts responsible for fewer than 15 miles of roadway to consolidate via referendum.

Public Act 98-1002

This law was intended to provide a framework for amicable mergers of certain units of local government and overlapping counties and municipalities. The act permits such mergers to occur following majority votes by both the governing board of the unit of government and the county board, village board, or city council that will be assuming responsibility for the services previously provided by the smaller unit of government. When such a merger occurs, the employees of the unit of government are transferred to the county or municipality. The act specifically applies to cemetery maintenance districts, civic center districts, public health districts, tuberculosis sanitarium districts, museum districts, the Illinois International Port District, solid waste disposal districts, street light districts, surface water protection districts, water service districts, water authorities, and water commissions.

Public Act 101-0230

This act was intended to provide McHenry County residents with two additional mechanisms for dissolving townships and township road districts. First, the act allows for township boards to place a dissolution referendum on the ballot by majority vote of the trustees. Second, the act

¹ DuPage County, "DuPage County Board Moves to Dissolve North Westmont Fire Protection District," April 10, 2018, <https://www.dupageco.org/Content.aspx?id=57255>.

² DuPage County, "DuPage County Approves Consolidation of Century Hill Street Lighting District," June 14, 2016, <https://www.dupageco.org/Content.aspx?id=52660>.



allows residents within a township's service area to petition for a dissolution referendum to be placed on the ballot.

If dissolution occurs through either of these mechanisms, the county will assume responsibility for all legally mandated services previously provided by both the township and road district, with the option to take over additional responsibilities at their discretion. Additionally, municipalities may request to take over responsibilities previously held by the dissolved road district. On passage of a referendum, the township would dissolve on the date specified by the referendum, which must be at least 90 days after the date of the election. To fund these services, the county will be permitted to levy a local property tax equaling no more than 90 percent of the property tax previously levied by the township. The law further specifies that all funds raised shall be used solely within the boundary of the former township.

The first two referenda under this law appeared on ballots in the March 2020 local elections. McHenry Township residents defeated a referendum that would have eliminated the township and road district by June 2020. Nunda Township voters defeated a referendum that would have eliminated Nunda Township and Nunda Township Road District by May 2037. Both referenda were defeated by large margins.

Governmental Joint Purchasing Act

Joint purchasing is a popular strategy used by public and private entities to negotiate lower prices through bulk ordering. In Illinois, government entities, or their purchasing officers, are permitted to enter into joint contracts with other units of government or qualifying not-for-profit agencies to purchase personal property, supplies, or services. Purchases made in this way are subject to an open, competitive bidding process. The contract must be awarded to the lowest responsible bidder or highest-ranked offer after accounting for the quality of the products or services and the conformity of the offer to the specifications outlined in the contract.

Joint purchasing already is a popular tool for governments in McHenry County. The MPI is a purchasing platform used by many municipalities in the county to procure a diverse range of goods and services, including road salt, pavement patching, and street sweeping. To date, the MPI has been used most heavily by public works departments. There is potential for other types of governments, including library districts, school districts, park districts, and others, to participate in the MPI directly or form a comparable purchasing cooperative.

Another, comparable but contrasting example of joint purchasing in the region is the GIS Consortium. The consortium is a nonprofit organization that provides member communities with access to a suite of GIS services in exchange for an annual membership fee. The service is particularly popular among smaller districts that would not, otherwise, have access to GIS services, although some larger communities have shown a preference for more flexible, in-house services.



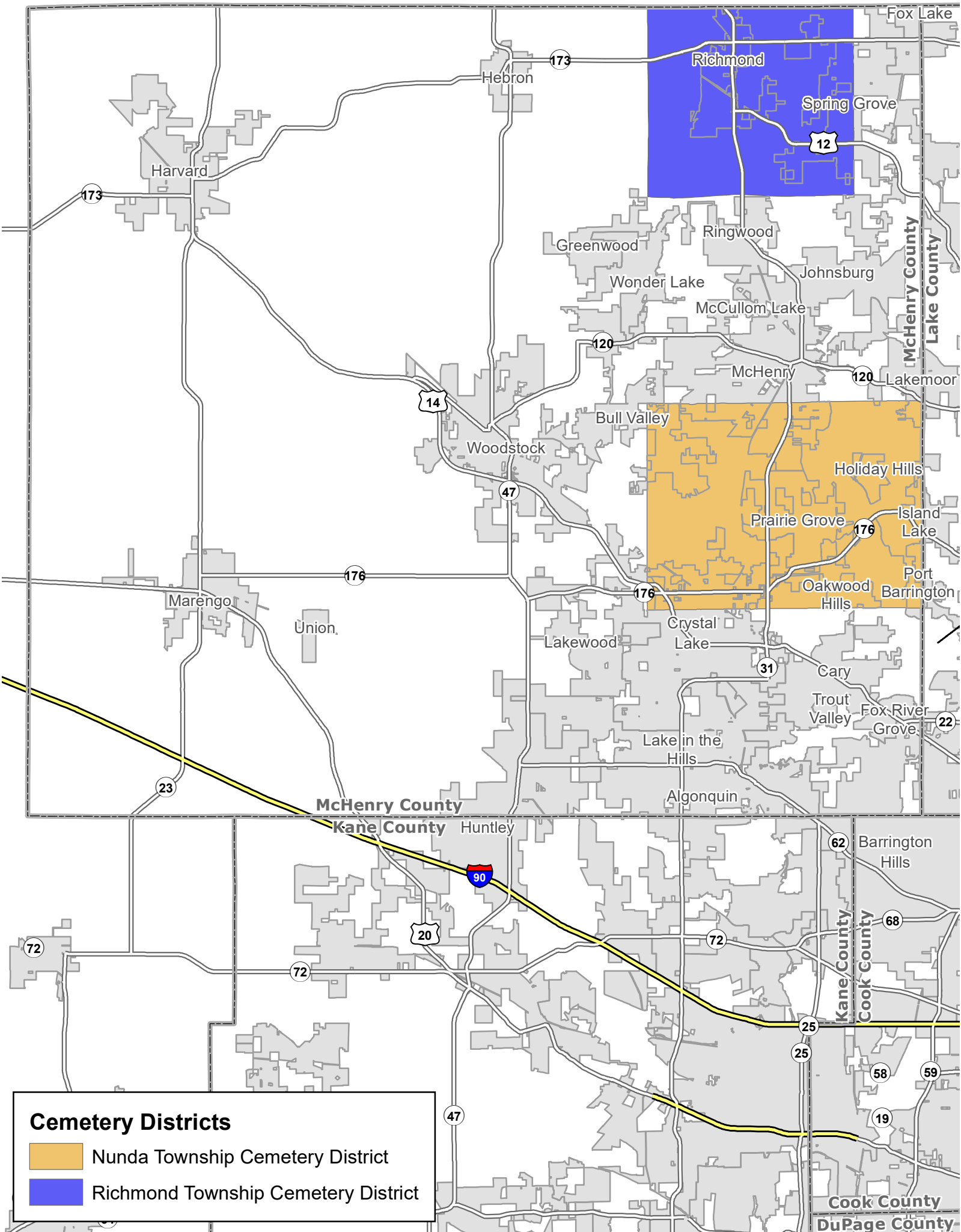
Intergovernmental Cooperation Act

Under the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, all public agencies, including municipalities, townships, school districts, and other units of governments, may enter into intergovernmental agreements with other public agencies in Illinois or any other state, to jointly provide services. Within McHenry County, intergovernmental agreements have been used to share IT services between two or more units of government, and more efficiently maintain roads and other public assets. In other parts of northeastern Illinois, intergovernmental agreements have been used to hire new employees who are shared between two or more municipalities (part time at each) and purchase shared equipment.





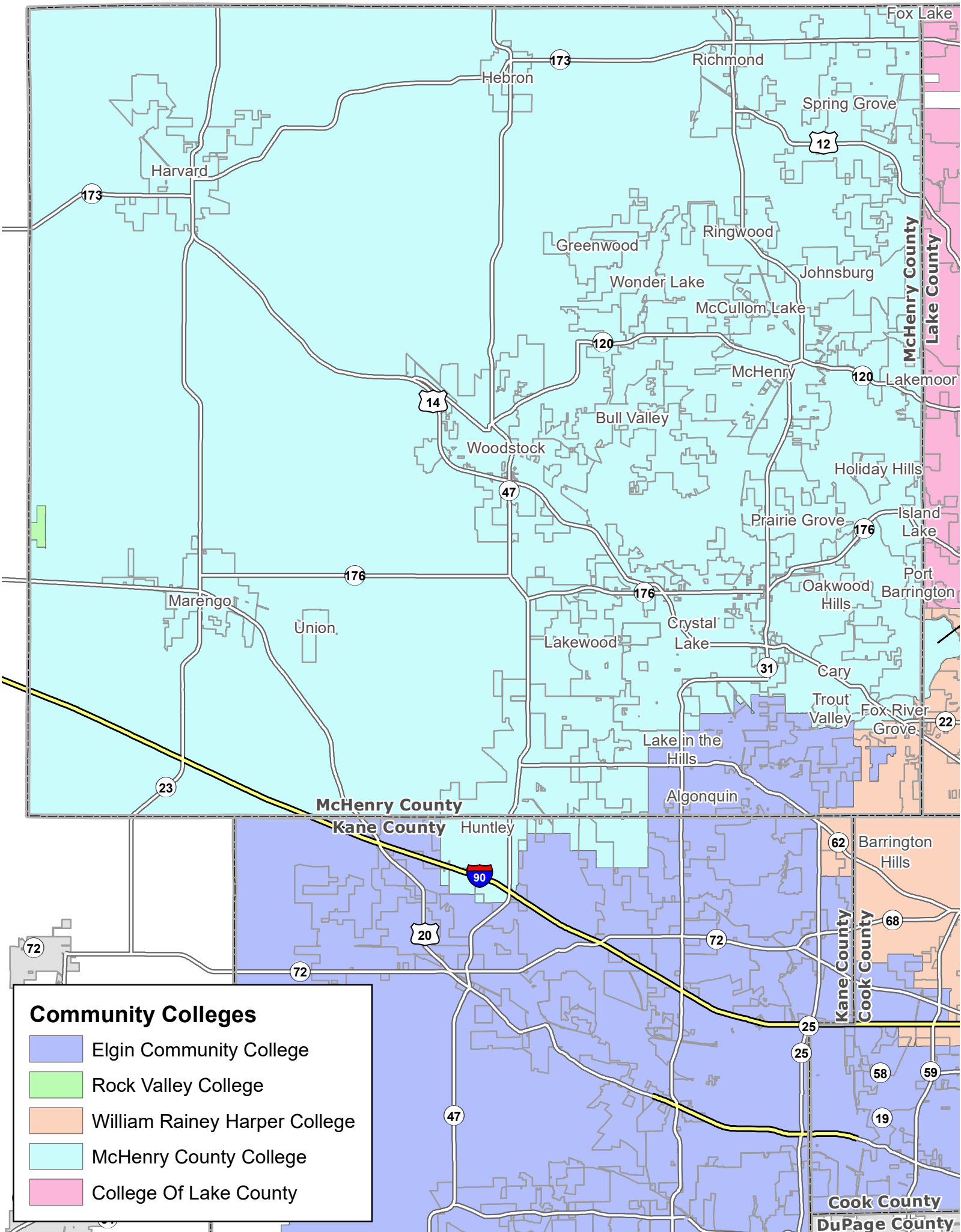
Appendix D: Maps of local governments in McHenry County





Cemetery Districts

-  Nunda Township Cemetery District
-  Richmond Township Cemetery District



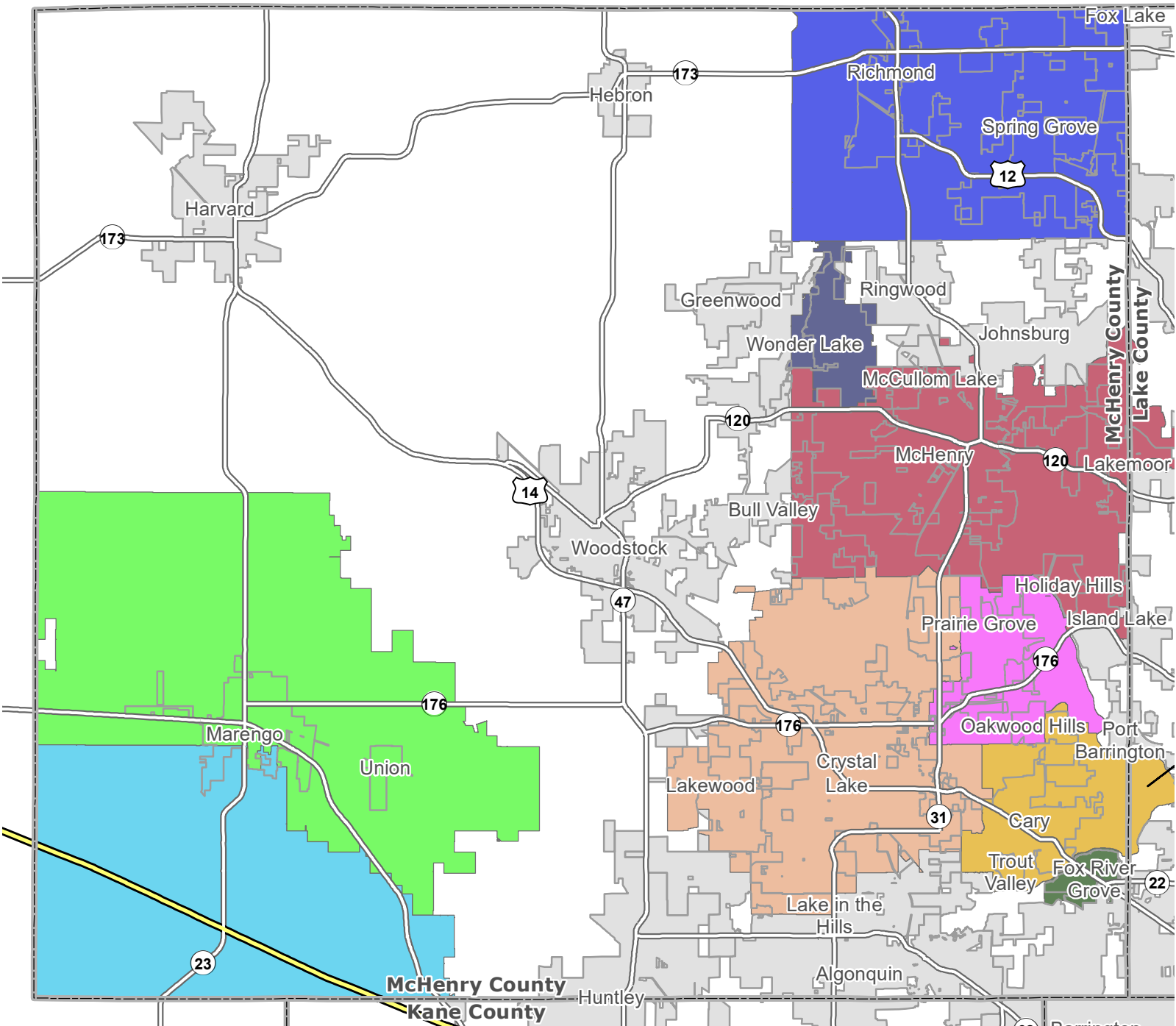
Community Colleges

- Elgin Community College
- Rock Valley College
- William Rainey Harper College
- McHenry County College
- College Of Lake County

McHenry County
Lake County

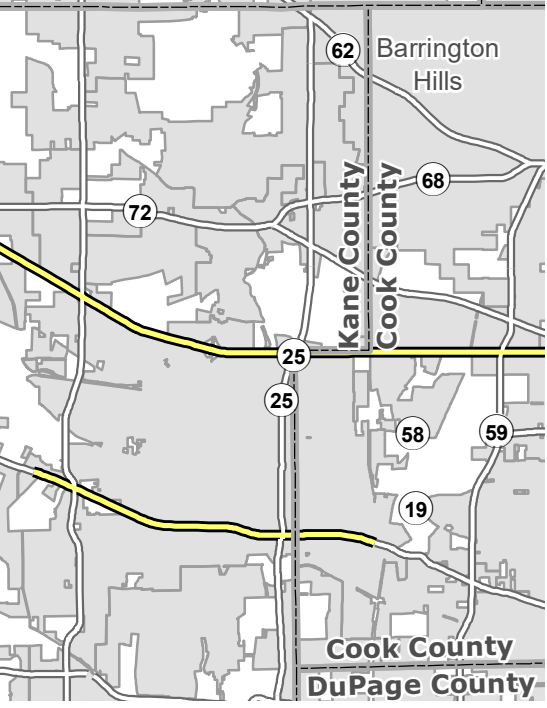
Kane County
Cook County

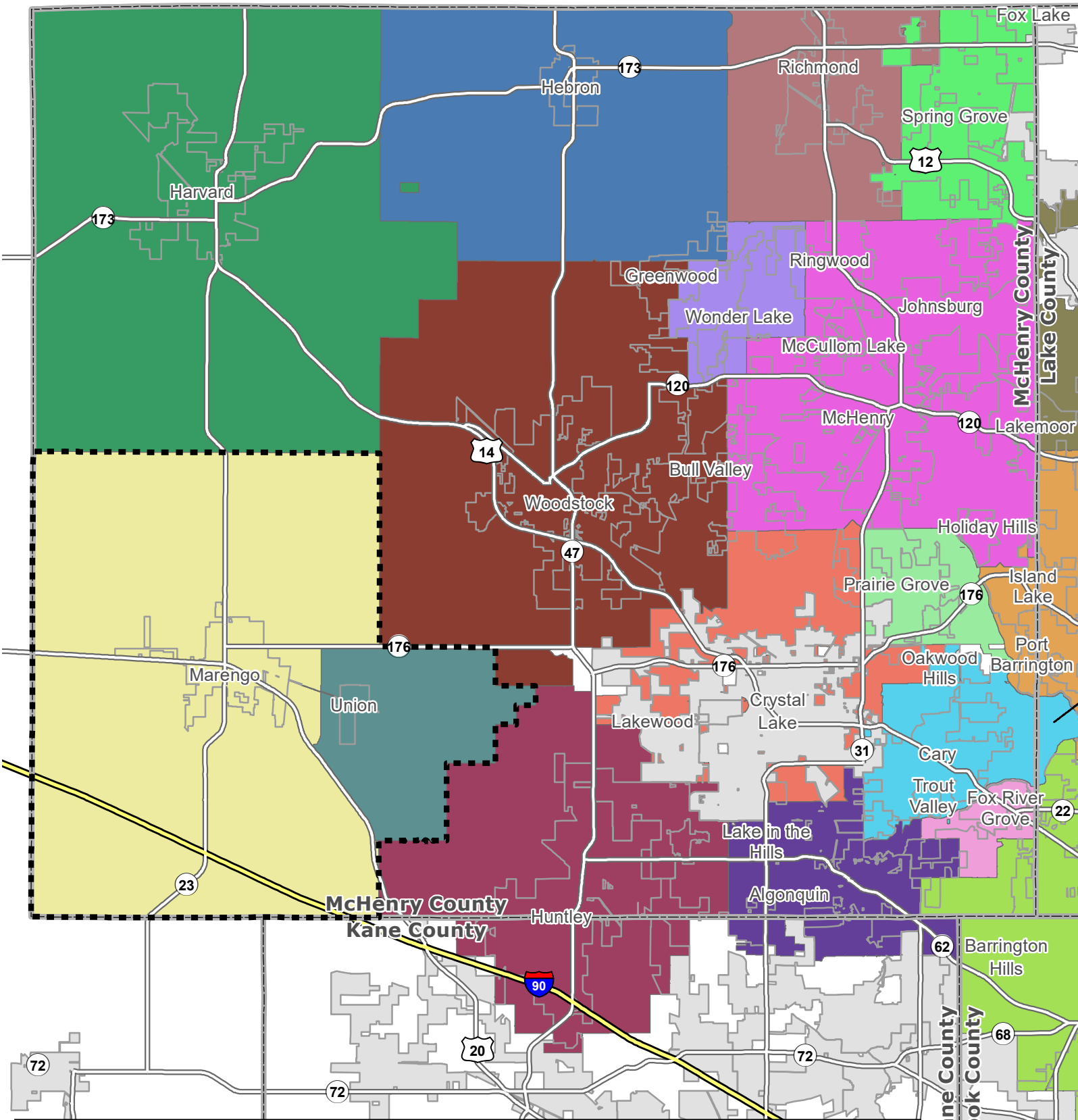
Cook County
DuPage County






















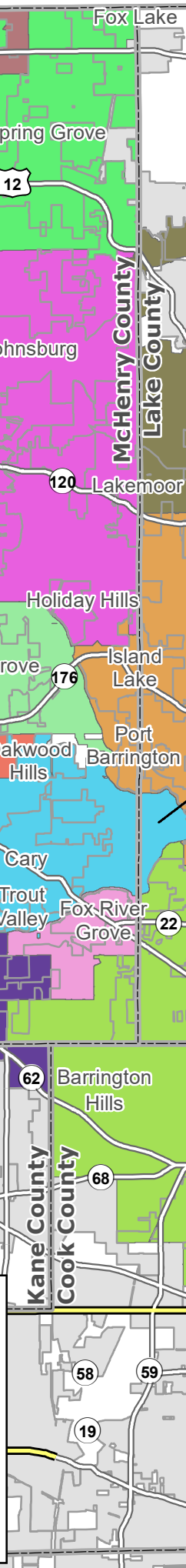
Elementary School Districts

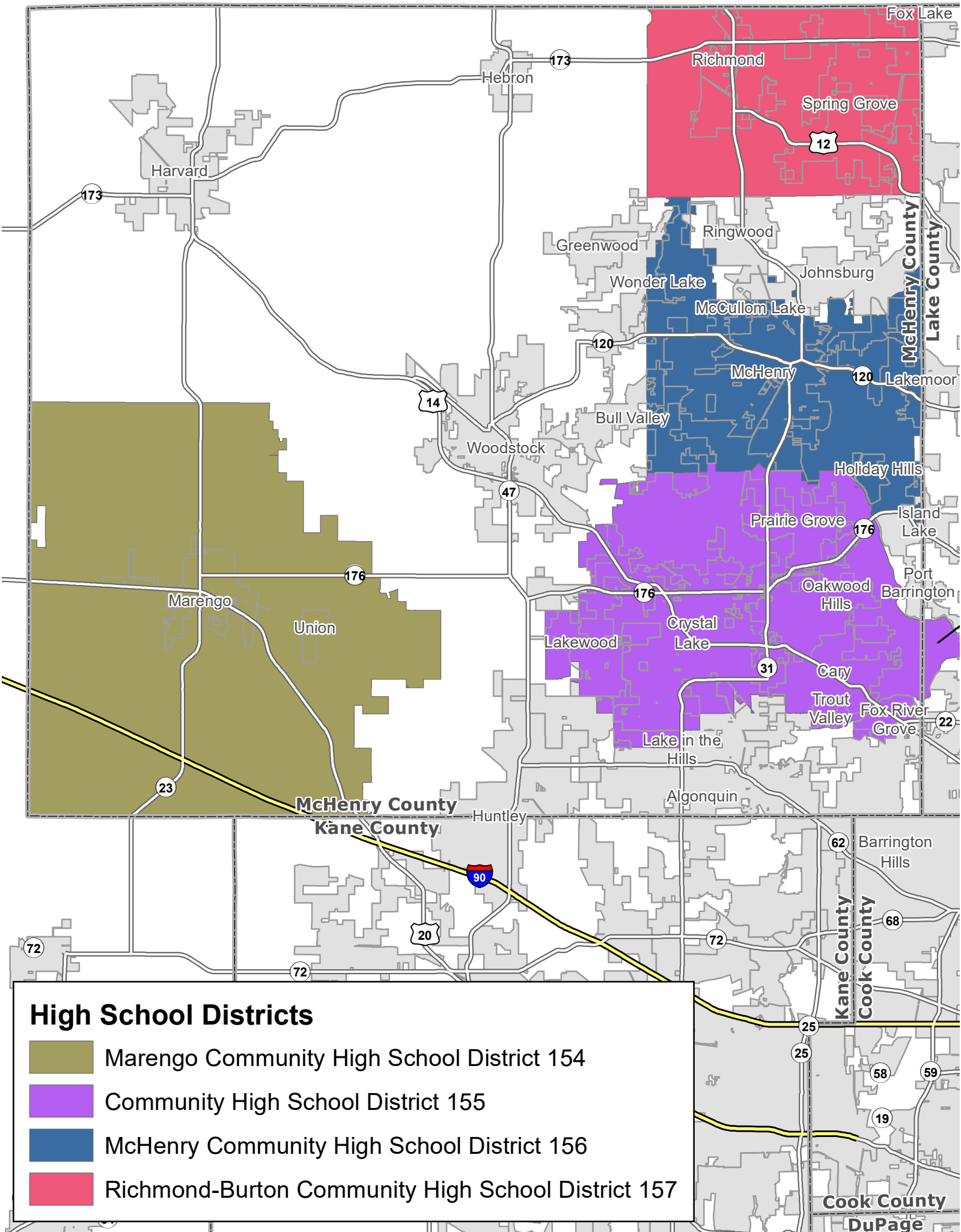
- Nippersink School District 2
- Fox River Grove School District 3
- McHenry School District 15
- Riley Community Consolidated School District 18
- Cary Community Consolidated School District 26
- Harrison School District 36
- Prairie Grove Consolidated School District 46
- Crystal Lake Community Consolidated School District 47
- Marengo-Union Elementary Community School District 165





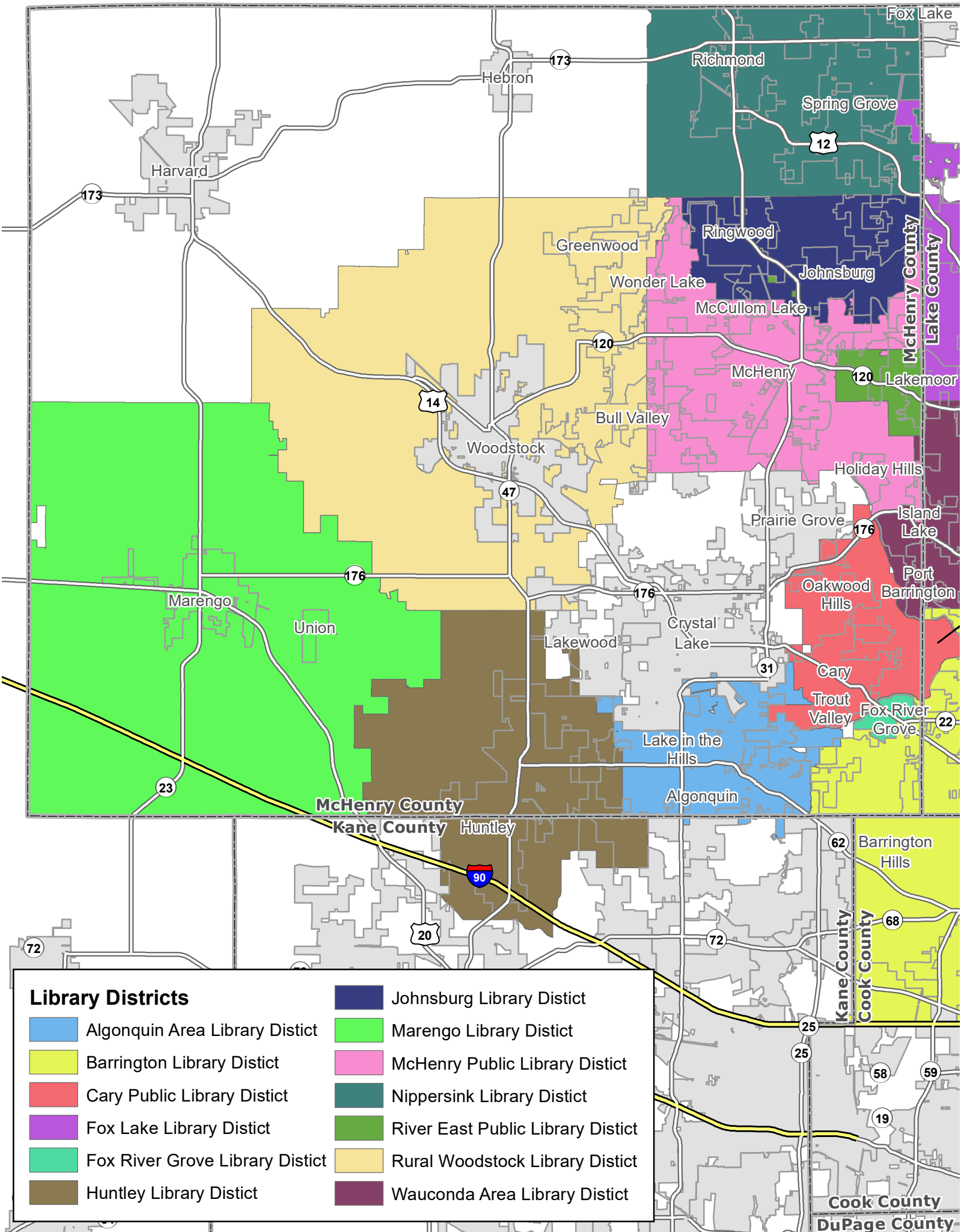
Fire Protection Districts			
	Algonquin FPD		Richmond FPD
	Barrington-Countryside FPD		Spring Grove FPD
	Cary FPD		Union FPD
	Crystal Lake Rural FPD		Wauconda FPD
	Fox Lake FPD		Wonder Lake FPD
	Fox River Grove FPD		Woodstock Fire/Rescue Dist.
	Harvard Community FPD		Marengo Rescue Squad
	Hebron-Alden-Greenwood FPD		
	Huntley FPD		
	Marengo FPD		
	McHenry FPD		
	Nunda Rural FPD		


















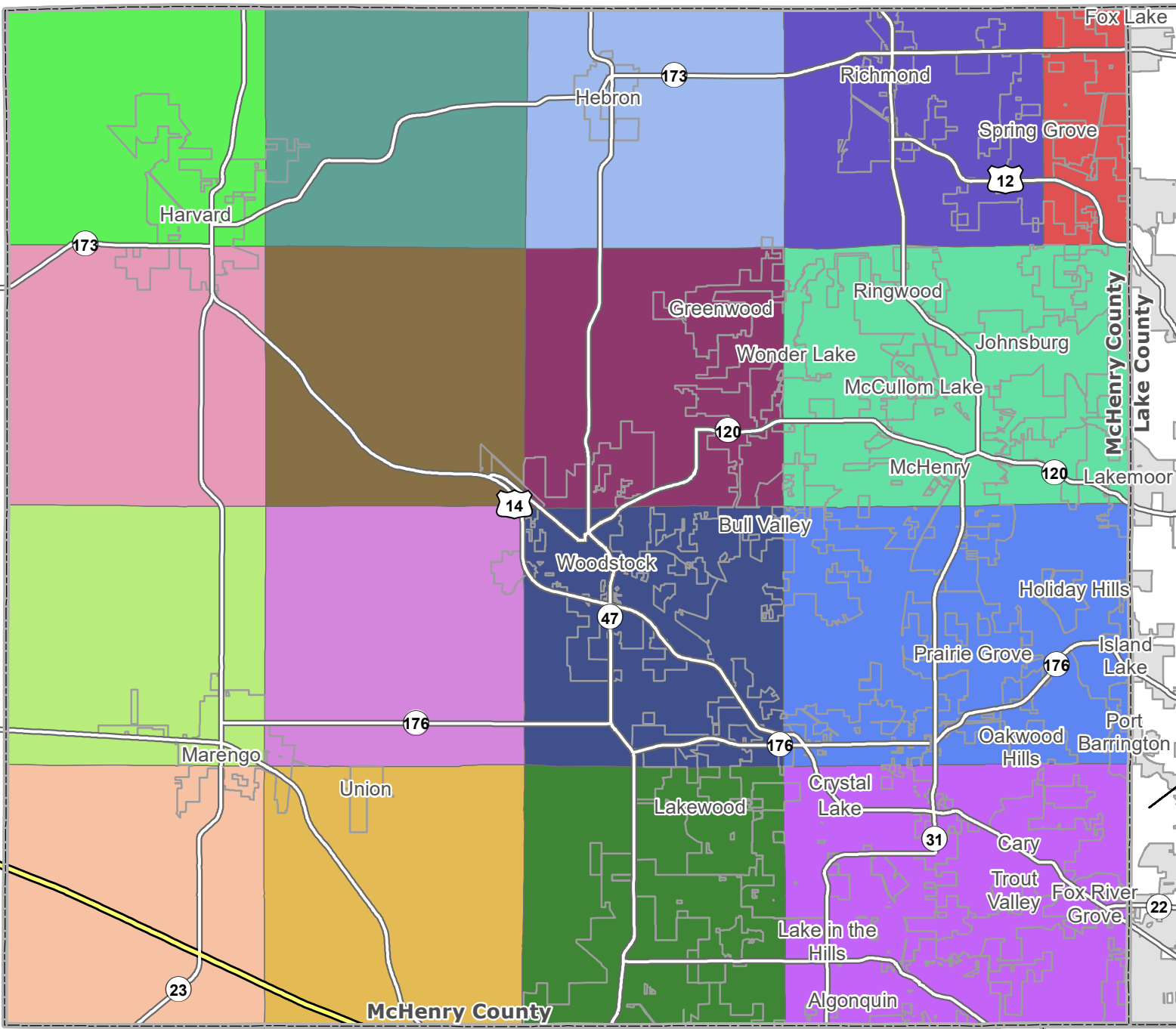
High School Districts

















- Marengo Community High School District 154
- Community High School District 155
- McHenry Community High School District 156
- Richmond-Burton Community High School District 157

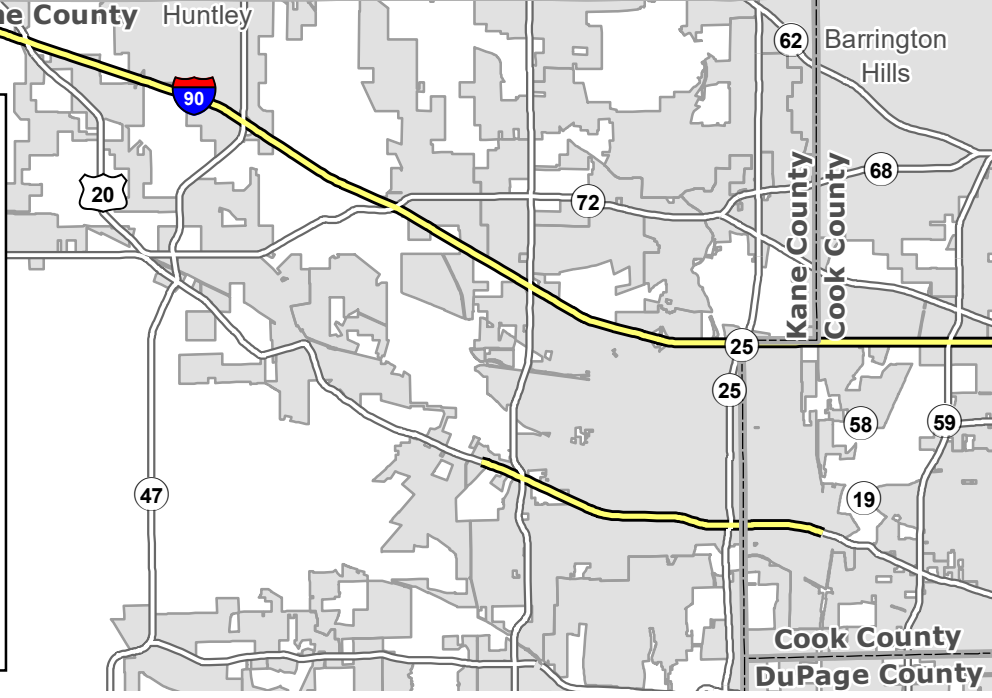


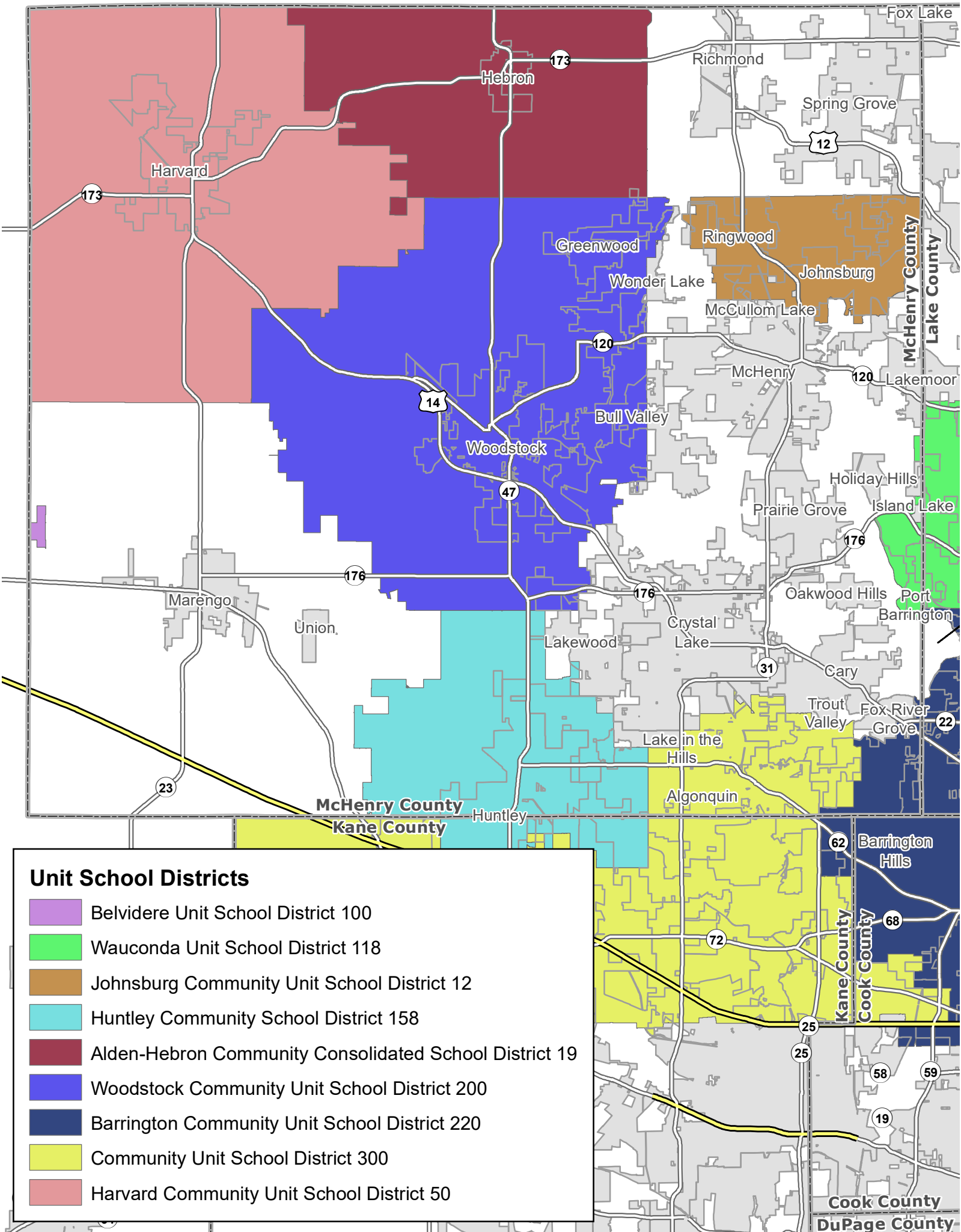
Library Districts

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
|  | Algonquin Area Library Distict |  | Johnsburg Library Distict |
|  | Barrington Library Distict |  | Marengo Library Distict |
|  | Cary Public Library Distict |  | McHenry Public Library Distict |
|  | Fox Lake Library Distict |  | Nippersink Library Distict |
|  | Fox River Grove Library Distict |  | River East Public Library Distict |
|  | Huntley Library Distict |  | Rural Woodstock Library Distict |
| | |  | Wauconda Area Library Distict |



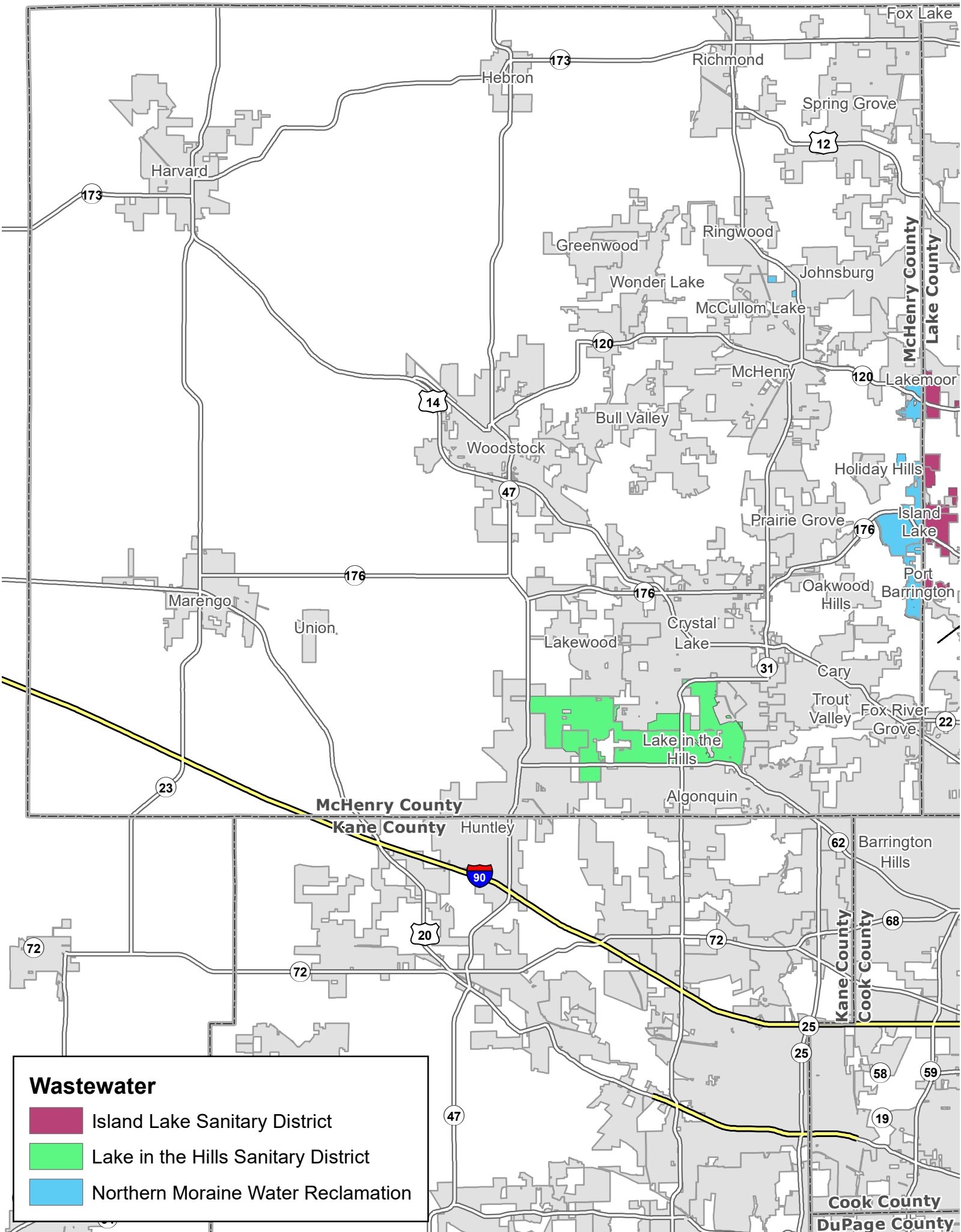
Townships	
	Alden
	Greenwood
	Algonquin
	Hartland
	Burton
	Hebron
	Chemung
	McHenry
	Coral
	Nunda
	Dorr
	Richmond
	Dunham
	Riley
	Grafton
	Seneca





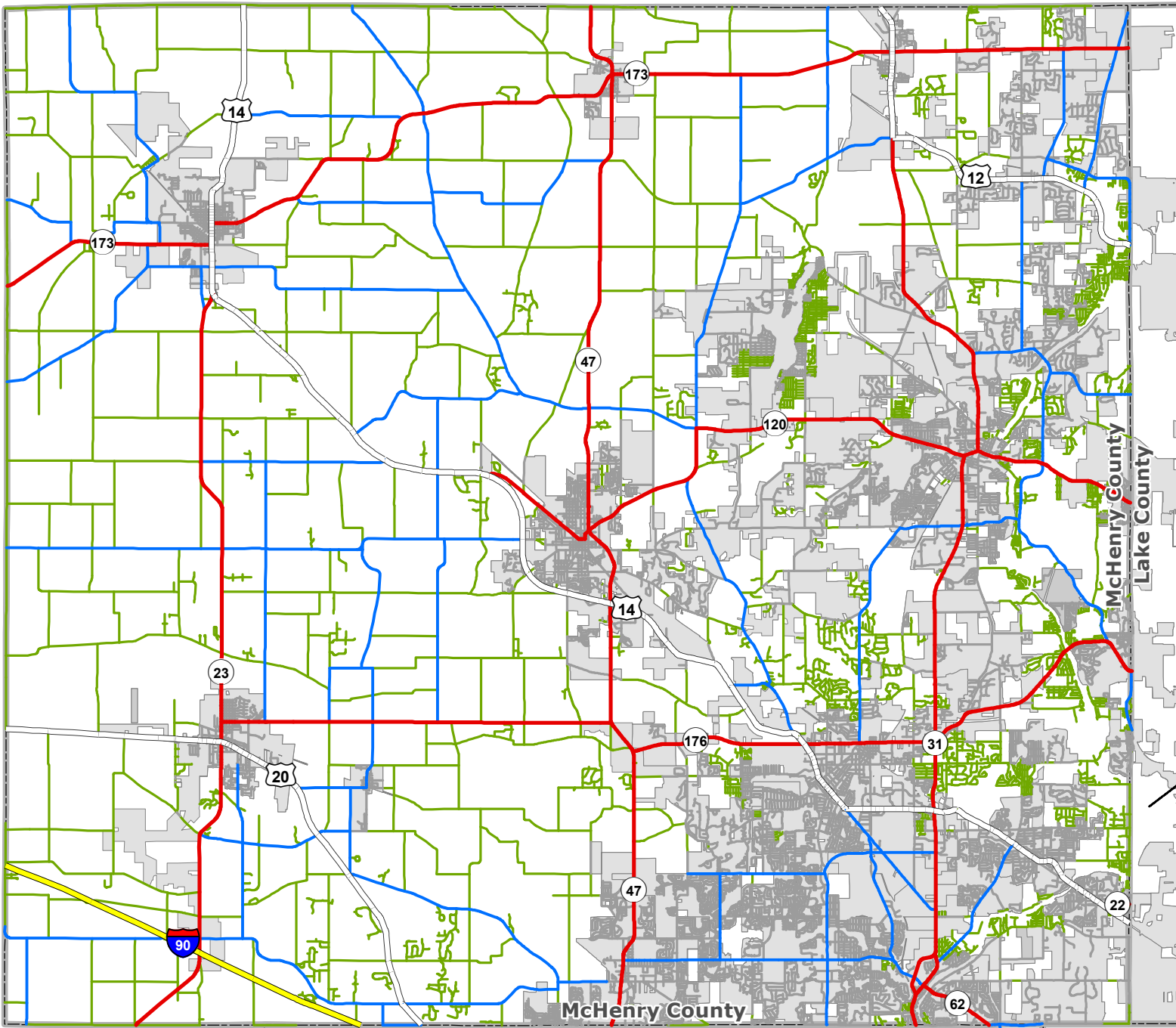
Unit School Districts

- Belvidere Unit School District 100
- Wauconda Unit School District 118
- Johnsburg Community Unit School District 12
- Huntley Community School District 158
- Alden-Hebron Community Consolidated School District 19
- Woodstock Community Unit School District 200
- Barrington Community Unit School District 220
- Community Unit School District 300
- Harvard Community Unit School District 50









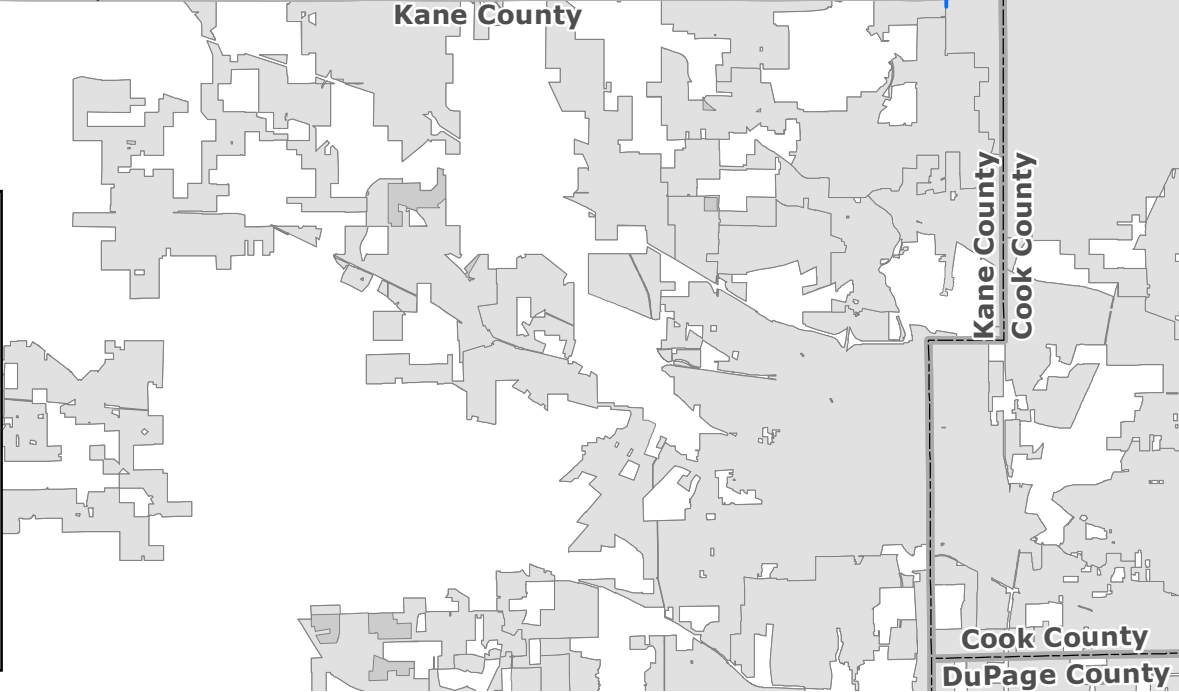
Wastewater

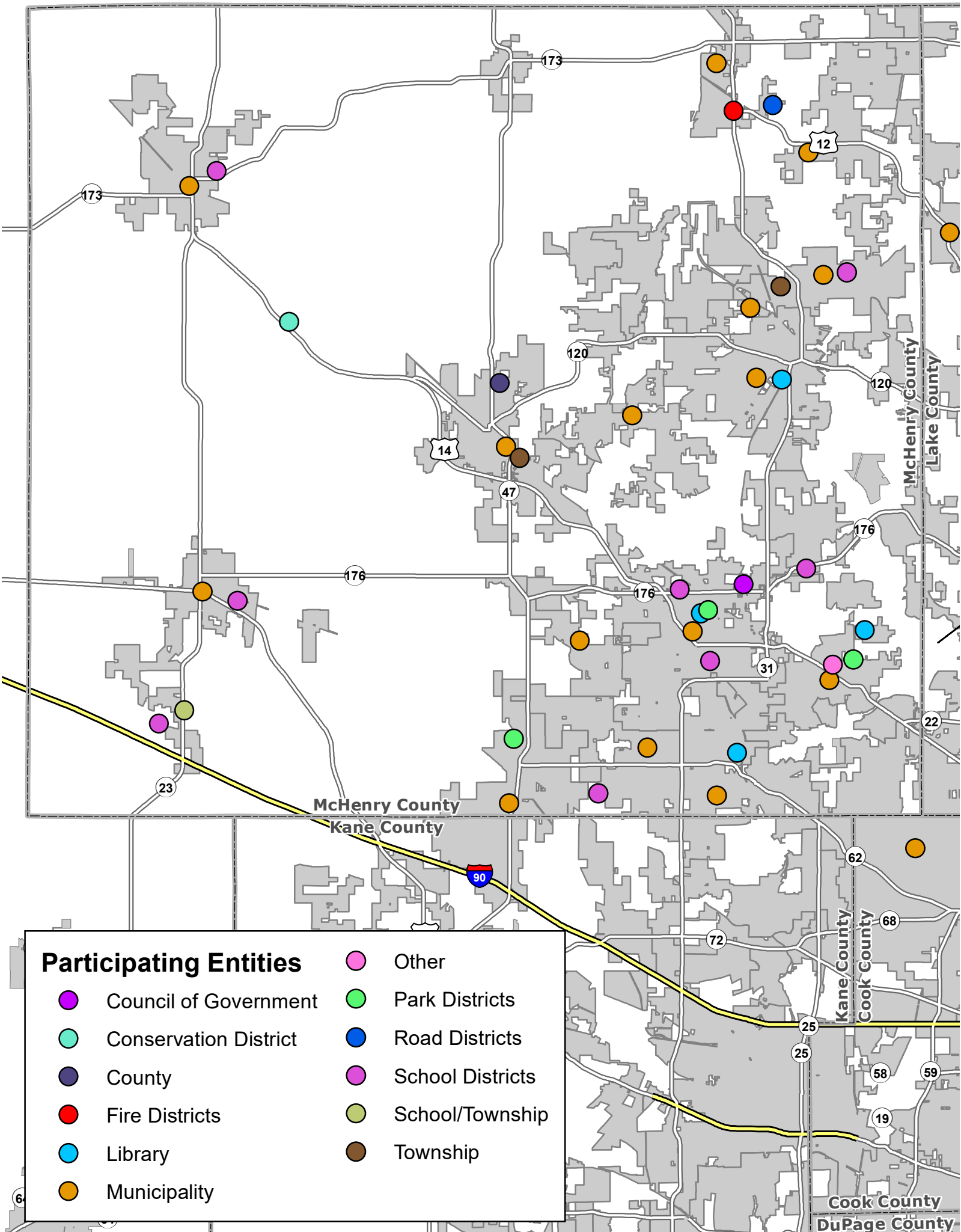
- Island Lake Sanitary District
- Lake in the Hills Sanitary District
- Northern Moraine Water Reclamation



Road Jurisdiction

-  Interstate
-  U.S. Route
-  State
-  County
-  Municipal
-  Township





Participating Entities

- | | |
|---|---|
| ● Council of Government | ● Other |
| ● Conservation District | ● Park Districts |
| ● County | ● Road Districts |
| ● Fire Districts | ● School Districts |
| ● Library | ● School/Township |
| ● Municipality | ● Township |

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is our region's comprehensive planning organization. The agency and its partners developed and are now implementing ON TO 2050, a new long-range plan to help the seven counties and 284 communities of northeastern Illinois implement strategies that address transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality-of-life issues.

See cmap.illinois.gov for more information.