

# Green Infrastructure Assessment Survey Overview

February 2012

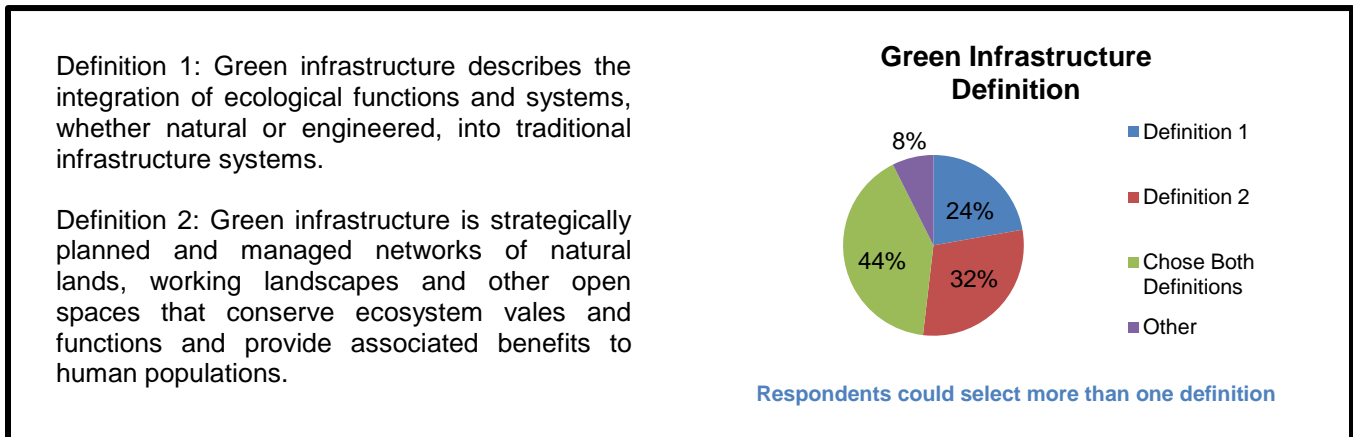
The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) is partnering with Virginia Tech on the National Urban and Community Forestry Challenge Cost-Share Grant project entitled *Green Infrastructure Assessment: Mapping and Evaluating the Support System for Green Infrastructure Planning in the United States*. The project seeks to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the institutional support system for green infrastructure planning and implementation in the United States, which will inform both funders and on-the-ground practitioners of synergies and barriers to green infrastructure implementation.

Green infrastructure is a built and/or natural system that provides critical ecological and environmental life support services as well as valuable social and economic benefits to human society, including clean air and water, healthy food and housing, efficient and safe energy and transportation, scenic and accessible recreation areas, and a stable climate among other desirable outcomes. In an effort to build the capacity of green infrastructure practitioners to more effectively and efficiently develop and implement green infrastructure plans, the *Green Infrastructure Assessment* will describe the current state of practice and existing support system for green infrastructure planning, including how the system is perceived by planners and other key stakeholders; and to evaluate opportunities for improving the support system for green infrastructure planning at multiple scales, including specific recommendations at the national level.

The following is an overview of the regional planning organizations' experiences with green infrastructure planning and implementation. The data was collected through a NARC survey of regional planning organizations, and illustrates their key roles in green infrastructure projects driven by a variety of needs and funded by a variety of government and private sources.

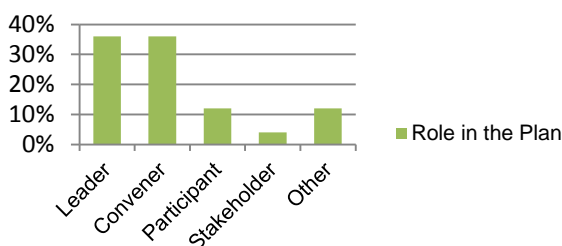
## SUMMARY

Survey respondents were asked to pick which of the following definitions best described their green infrastructure projects or provide their own definition, as various definitions have been proposed at the federal and local levels in recent years.



Of the respondents that selected other, only one provided an alternative definition, which focused on the “biological, ecological and hydrological principles that constitute priority conservation areas, contiguous habitats and potential endangered species locations.”

## RPOs Roles in Green Infrastructure Plans

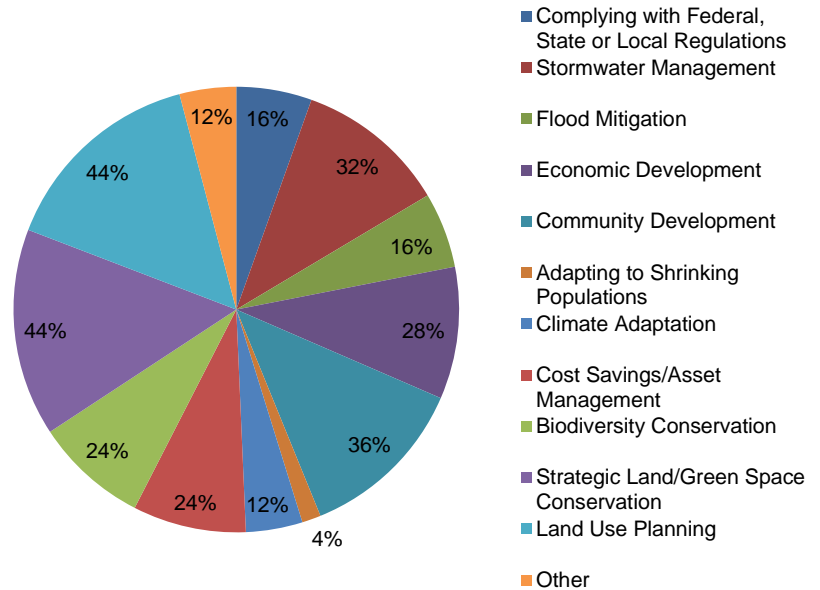


The largest proportion of responding regional planning organizations serve as the leaders and conveners of green infrastructure plans, utilizing their strength in coalition building and leadership and the critical role they play in the creation and implementation of regional green infrastructure plans. Additional roles played by regional planning organizations included, author, facilitator, educator and planner, illustrating the depth of services and variety of support available from these multijurisdictional planning agencies.

## Primary Motivators for Developing a Green Infrastructure Plan

Another important factor of the *Green Infrastructure Assessment* is mapping the motivators regional planning organizations use to develop green infrastructure plans. These drivers represent the variety of benefits of green infrastructure to a region, including bolstering economic development, mitigating climate adaptation, facilitating cost savings and assisting with the compliance of Federal, State or Local regulations.

In addition, regional planning organizations also used green infrastructure plans to encourage community building and assist in “maintaining [a] region’s economic competitiveness and livability,” along with promoting “alternative transportation” in their region.



Respondents could select more than one driver

Funding for green infrastructure plans came from Federal, State, Local and private sources, with the majority of funding stemming from Federal and State programs.

Federal	State	Local	Private
➤ Federal Highway Administration	➤ State Department of Transportation	➤ Local Development Commissions	➤ Foundations
➤ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	➤ State General Assembly	➤ Regional Development Commissions	➤ Development Fees
➤ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	➤ Coastal Management	➤ Regional Planning Organizations	➤ Philanthropic Funds
➤ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	➤ State Parks	➤ Sales and Property Taxes	
➤ U.S. Forest Service	➤ Watershed Funds		
	➤ State Governor’s Office		

Overall, the survey findings identified a wide variety of roles, drivers and funding sources for green infrastructure projects at the local and regional level. It also reinforced the strength of regions as leaders and conveners in issue areas that cross local jurisdictional boundaries, such as green infrastructure.

For additional information on this project or NARC’s longstanding work in the area of green infrastructure, contact Mia Colson at 202.986.1032 ext. 211 or [mia@NARC.org](mailto:mia@NARC.org).

### Survey Data

- 25 Regional Planning Organizations from 13 states provided survey responses.
- Respondents included:
  - Clean Air Agencies, Councils of Governments, Designated Economic Development Districts, Designated Local Development Districts, Local Governments and Metropolitan Planning Organizations.
- Percentages were calculated from the total number of respondents, instead of the total number of responses per question.

