As early as 900 AD, this region was an urban center. There are ancient village sites and artifact communities located on both sides of the Mississippi River from the Woodland and Mississippian cultures – including Cahokia Mounds and other mound complexes. As other trails followed by Europeans used the rivers and overland trails to explore this frontier, the Village of Cahokia was born. In 1803, President Jefferson bought the Louisiana Territory from France, and sent Lewis & Clark to embark on their Corps of Discovery Expedition launching from the Missouri River 1804 and returning 1806.

Today our region is a significant metropolitan area, covering 8,649 square miles and boasting a population 2.9 million. Trail users enjoy the preferred transportation, robust stewardship, increasing costs, and renewed interest in active living have grown a 200-mile trail and bikeway system as part of the bi-state transportation network. The Mounds Heritage Trail is proud to be part of the regional success story through conservation, heritage, and recreation.

**Experience The Sea of Verdure**

Farmers, bicyclists, and pedestrians, the Mounds Heritage Trail corridor is ideal. Once a Sea of Verdure along over 100 miles of bluff top, the area is part of the Mississippi Flyway, the migration corridor of the nation’s waterfowl and many birds traveling from summer nesting grounds to winter feeding areas. Due to the soil and nutrients found are unique to this area, there are abundant chatting birds, cultivated lands, and gardens. Agriculture is one of the area’s leading economic resources; restoration and reclamation efforts can be seen throughout the region. Along the trail, wetlands and bat friendly trees will be a unique sight for the urban landscape. Many species of trees, grasses, plants, and native flowering species will be a sight for conservationists and naturalists alike as well as the casual observer.

The nearly flat terrain of the American Bottom is ideal for finding and exploring the valleys of the historic region. However, the climb from Rockwood to Columbia, IL, or Sugarbush Road in south St. Louis could be a welcome challenge for some riders and walkers as they approach the trail’s end.

**Connect Our Communities**

The Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site preserves, interprets, and celebrates the contribution of the people who established, built, and lived at Cahokia Mounds and surrounding indigenous communities on both sides of the river. This included a complex of over 250 mounds in Missouri north of the current location of the Gateway Arch and East St. Louis. The plan to develop a Mounds Heritage Trail extends east past the site and into the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial.

In cooperation with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Gateway Arch National Park Service, and American Rivers, the Mounds Heritage Trail sets an example of how communities and government agencies can work together to provide trails in communities. The goal is an Illinois system of connected trails, where all 42 state's residents and visitors along historic canals and old railroad corridors. IDNR also partners with many regional and local government managers, together with trail leadership organizations, to promote trails and trail facilities in Madison County and St. Clair County.

**Great Rivers Greenway**

Great Rivers Greenway is a 35-mile interpretive trail providing a great opportunity to enjoy the outdoors and your favorite activities. This interpretive trail provides extensive displays, site tours, and trails for education, recreation, and the “frontier” by Euro-American settlers. The National Parks Service states “the Gateway Arch reflects St. Louis’ vision of the citizens of the region. Great Rivers Greenway identified five goals which support the preservation of the area’s leading economic resources. Restoration experiences on the trail. [More information at IDNR, the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, HeartLands Conservancy (formerly SWIRC&D), and other selected points of interest are listed with GPS coordinates for navigation on the chart to the left. For further information many of these sites also have Facebook pages and websites. Along with information on where to visit in our region, we hope you will be inspired to explore the legends and history that our area has to offer.**