Executive Director's Spring 2017 Report
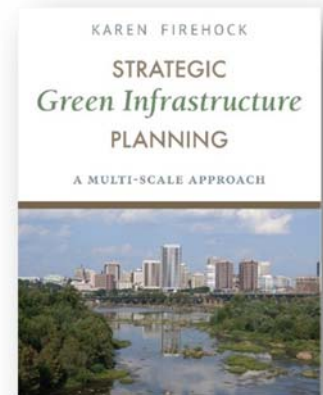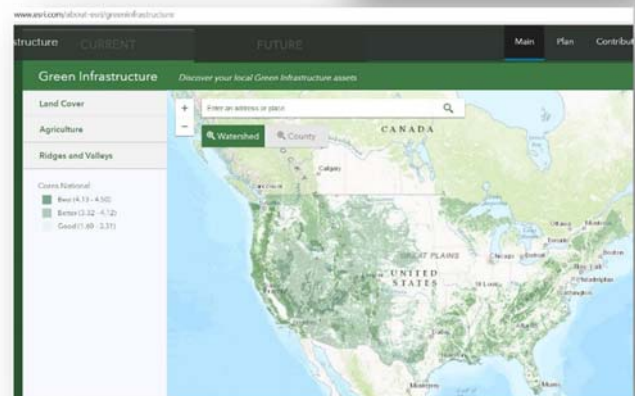
Happy Anniversary to GIC! In May 2017, the GIC celebrates 10 years of successfully helping communities identify, protect and restore their most valuable natural and cultural assets! GIC was founded in December 2006 but we opened our doors with the first staff Karen Firehock in May 2007. Ms. Firehock co-founded the GIC and this month celebrates moving from a one person office to now having four full time and three part time employees working across the United States on projects as diverse as creating a national map of intact habitats with Esri, featured work in National Geographic, building an arboretum with and for veterans at McGuire Hospital, creating state, county and city habitat models for 50 communities and writing many state guides and now a national book for how to do this work. The GIC is developing its plan for the next decade and invites its partners to explore ideas with GIC as it charts its course in the fields of resilience planning, community health and multi-scale landscape conservation.

National Book: GIC's green infrastructure planning guide, published in Oct. 2015, continues to get rave reviews. It draws on GIC's decade of experience. The book showcases examples from multiple states and covers implementation of green infrastructure planning at all scales and environments from developed to wild. Chapter Seven describes how to rank important landscapes in any state. Get the book from Island Press!
http://islandpress.org/book/strategic-green-infrastructure-planning.

National Model: The GIC partnered with Esri, the world's leading geographic information mapping software company to create a national model of green infrastructure based on GIC's habitat models developed for many states. The national model can be accessed to learn where the highest values habitats are located nationally. The data can also be downloaded and manipulated to add local priorities and other overlay maps to create a custom local plan. The GIC is writing a book for Esri describing how to use the model. It is most applicable to suburban and rural areas.
http://www.esri.com/about-esri/greeninfrastructure

Trees and Stormwater: The GIC assisted 7 states with winning a grant from the USDA Forest Service to link better stormwater management with urban tree canopy in the southern U.S. The GIC is now working in cities in VA, NC, SC, GA and FL and will soon add cities in AL and OK to the project. The project is mapping tree canopy for 13 cities and then linking their urban forests to stormwater management. A tree can uptake anywhere from 400 to 3000 gallons of stormwater annually, which is a lot of water considering all the trees in a city. This can help cities reduce flooding and impacts from climate change – stay tuned for the exciting statistics and findings! The GIC will also look at other benefits, such as reducing urban heating and providing outdoor recreation.

University Curricula and Building the Practice: The GIC continued teaching two graduate level green infrastructure courses at University of Virginia, one at the site scale - Green Cities; and one at the landscape scale - Green Lands. The Green Cities course is funded by the Univ. of VA, while Green Lands is funded by the VA Department of Forestry with funds from the USDA Forest Service's Urban and Community Forests Program. Graduate students produce real plans for our adopted localities. This meets the GIC board's directive to grow the field of practice (in addition to our training program). Numerous course graduates -- planners, landscape architects and engineers are now working in this field.

GI Technical Support: The GIC is available to support counties and communities in developing their own GI network at any scale. In 2016 and 17, the GIC continued work with partners such as statewide nonprofit organizations, counties and state agencies, to help them achieve their goals. The GIC wrapped up projects in Summerville and in Darlington SC and is now working with land trusts in SC to help them identify strategic high quality landscapes for easements. At right, Summerville residents identify their green priorities.

Green Infrastructure Community Planning Grants for Virginia: The GIC is wrapping up its work to assist 11 Virginia localities with green infrastructure plans thanks to Re-Design Funding from the USDA Forest Service and the Virginia Department of Forestry. Each project utilizes different strategies and techniques but they all follow the GIC's 6-step process for creating a successful plan. GIC is helping them map key habitats, assess tree canopy and land cover, set goals, assess existing natural assets, determine risks, develop opportunities and begin implementation of conservation or restoration work.

Living Shorelines Green Infrastructure Resilience Planning in Norfolk, VA: Since October 2015, the GIC has been working on a green infrastructure coastal resiliency plan for the City of Norfolk, funded by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Norfolk is the second most threatened coastal landscape in America. The GIC is mapping coastal areas that will be lost to Sea Level Rise and recommending where to locate future habitats. At left, a heron benefits from a community built living shoreline project. The GIC has mapped the city's green assets and is now developing strategies for resilience such as how to replace parks and living shorelines once rising seas envelop them. Half of the city's parks will be affected by rising seas in the next 25 years. The GIC is also developing strategies for stormwater management.

Healing Our Landscapes: Healing Our Veterans: Following on work to map the City of Richmond's green infrastructure and opportunities to re-green the city; GIC installed demonstration projects on vacant and underutilized lands. One such project is the "The Phyllis E. Galanti Memorial Arboretum." Phyllis founded the POW-MIA program. In 2016, the U.S, Congress dedicated the arboretum at McGuire Veterans Hospital, recognizing GIC's work to use green infrastructure to build healthy communities. More than 83 trees are growing at the GIC-created arboretum. Patients who can see or access green space heal 30% faster than those who can't. Dominion Virginia Power, VA Dept. of Forestry and Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay are key funders. Luckstone donated the dedication boulders. The GIC employed and trained 8 disabled veterans, 6 of whom graduated to full time jobs. Several of the vets are pictured right.

Want to learn more? Download project case booklets at http://www.gicinc.org/projects.htm, buy our book or connect with us on Facebook! Support our work -- all donations are 100% tax deductible and help communities. Donate at http://www.gicinc.org/donate.htm Contact: GIC, 440 Premier Circle, Suite 220, Charlottesville VA 22901 (434)244-0322