



Metropolitan **Planning Council**

2013 Plan for Prosperity



Metropolitan Planning Council

Each year, the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) presents its 12-month agenda for researching, advocating and implementing policies that advance our mission to shape a more competitive and livable greater Chicago region. MPC's policy agenda for 2013 focuses on these areas:

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Dear Partners:

Kirsten Bjork and Bill Brown purchased their first home in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood in May 2012, and like many first-time homeowners, they immediately started dreaming about home improvements. When they received a postcard from the Metropolitan Planning Council and Ald. Rey Colon's office notifying them that their property is part of the Milwaukee Avenue Green Development Corridor—and therefore eligible for funding from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to make stormwater management renovations—they jumped at the opportunity.

Bjork and Brown worked with MPC and Matt Fordham of Environments Studio to design a new yard with rain gardens, native grasses, and permeable paving, which will allow rain that falls on their property to soak into the earth, rather than run off into Logan Square's already overwhelmed sewers and contribute to local flooding. "Getting involved in this project prompted me to really notice the flooding in our alleys and at neighboring homes and businesses," said Bjork. "We were thrilled about getting involved, not only to help our yard, but also to improve our community, both environmentally and aesthetically."

Indeed, MPC is leading this initiative not only to help property owners like Bjork and Brown and the Logan Square neighborhood, but also to demonstrate cost-effective approaches to local stormwater management. As we measure how much grantees' renovations reduce flooding in Logan Square, we are also exploring how local and state policies, along with funding from the public and private sectors, can encourage these approaches. We're developing a planning template for use across the region as we brace for wetter weather. This interplay between solid research, inspired advocacy, and provocative demonstration projects makes this organization unlike any other.

Since our founding in 1934, the Metropolitan Planning Council has been an independent voice for pragmatic, positive change in the Chicago region. Our long and consistent history of success, in both good economic times and bad, has earned MPC a trusted reputation for identifying and analyzing critical issues, and building consensus on solutions. MPC knows the necessary ingredients of an economic turnaround, and we serve as a catalyst to bring the people and ideas together to get it done.

On the following pages, the Metropolitan Planning Council proposes practical, progressive ideas for planning and development that will lead to a region with a stronger, more resilient economy. We welcome your feedback and invite you to partner with us to put the ideas in our 2013 Plan for Prosperity to work.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "MarySue Barrett". The signature is fluid and cursive.

MarySue Barrett
President
Metropolitan Planning Council

Vibrant neighborhoods and a competitive regional economy

Great communities and thriving metropolitan regions don't happen by accident—they result from careful planning and coordination. MPC is helping communities plan bustling retail corridors, vibrant public spaces, and redeveloped neighborhoods by connecting the dots between issues, assets, geographies, and sectors. The result: healthy communities and a stronger metropolitan economy, from northwest Indiana to northeastern Illinois to southeastern Wisconsin.



Priority

Assist and advocate for communities collaborating to solve planning and community development challenges.

While many municipalities coordinate with neighboring communities to provide services such as fire protection and waste management more efficiently and cost effectively, few communities work across municipal borders on planning and development. Since 2009, with a broad range of public and private sector partners, the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), and MPC have been assisting three clusters of towns in Cook County to pursue interjurisdictional strategies for housing and community development. In December 2012, the three organizations issued the report *Supporting and Sustaining Interjurisdictional Collaboration for Housing and Community Development*, which presented recommendations for strengthening these clusters and establishing more like them across the region over the next decade.

In 2013, MPC is pursuing policy reforms identified as essential to effective, efficient actions by clusters of towns. For instance, MPC is advocating that the U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development, the State of Illinois, and Cook County reward communities that collaborate on planning and community development by adjusting funding guidelines to favor this approach and by allowing funding to support each cluster's shared staff. To allow clusters to carry out joint devel-

opment, MPC is supporting the establishment of new public and private financing tools, including transit-oriented development funds, the Cook County Land Bank and South Suburban Land Bank, and strategic ventures with area financial institutions. Through Homes for a Changing Region—a market-based housing planning exercise that each of the three clusters has completed—Mayors Caucus, CMAP and MPC will establish a framework within which additional clusters of communities can work together on shared planning and development challenges.

MPC is active with two additional promising collaborations: We are assisting the Northwest Water Planning Alliance, a coordinated effort between about 80 communities, five counties, and five councils of government in northeastern Illinois, to cooperatively manage their shared water supplies. We facilitate a U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development pilot through which eight public housing authorities in metropolitan Chicago are sharing resources to improve opportunities for families using housing choice vouchers. By tracking and highlighting the barriers and successes of all of these initiatives, MPC is helping our own metropolitan region and others across the nation achieve greater results through this “right-sized” approach to planning and development.

A united mega-region

MPC recognizes the economic interdependence of communities from southeastern Wisconsin to northwestern Indiana, and is helping advance transformative investments through the Gary and Region Investment Project. In 2013, MPC is partnering with the Tri-State Alliance to identify new opportunities to leverage our mega-regional assets—such as our enviable position on the shores of Lake Michigan—for a growing economy.

Vibrant public places



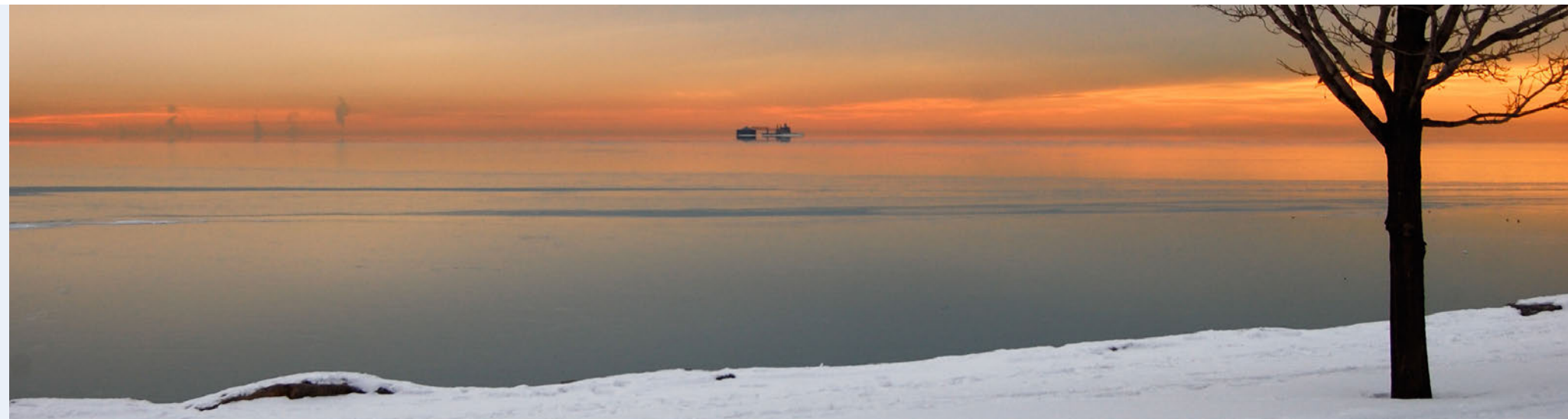
MPC is helping to make the Chicago area a destination of choice through Placemaking—an approach that encourages regular people to work with their neighbors and urban planners as co-creators and stewards of neighborhood public spaces. New technology can equip people to become more effective Placemakers, so MPC is developing a mobile app that City of Chicago departments and their sister agencies can adapt to engage people in making vibrant public spaces, from neighborhood parks to their local train station.

Coordinated neighborhood reinvestment

Through Reconnecting Neighborhoods, MPC is supporting coordinated transportation and retail development in Chicago neighborhoods to complement housing reinvestment through the Chicago Housing Authority's Plan for Transformation. MPC and the Bronzeville Alliance partnered on the March 2012 report *Developing Vibrant Retail in Bronzeville* and together secured funding for a dedicated staff person to advance the community's plan. MPC also is teaming up with local leaders to use Placemaking to transform the 47th Street CTA Green Line station from a place people rush through into a community gathering place and a magnet for economic development.

Responsible, productive use of Chicago's water assets

Metropolitan Chicago is fortunate to have access to abundant fresh water—from Lake Michigan to groundwater to rain. Our region relies on these resources not only for drinking water, but also for recreational, industrial and transportation uses. Without thoughtful policies and planning, we risk mismanaging these assets and jeopardizing community and regional growth. MPC is helping decisionmakers at all levels of government develop plans and policies to manage our water resources—including stormwater and wastewater—in more productive and cost-effective ways.



Priority

Assist communities with stormwater mitigation.

Rain is a free resource, but often it becomes a costly nuisance for communities and property owners when it overflows sewers, floods streets, and ruins basements. Part of the problem comes from more frequent and intense storms due to climate change. Aging infrastructure can't manage such large volumes of rain, pointing to one solution: Communities need to invest in maintaining existing infrastructure and modernizing systems where appropriate. MPC is researching and advocating for appropriate revenue streams for such investments.

While maintaining existing "grey" infrastructure—pipes and pumps—is important, it isn't always the most cost-effective option. That's why MPC is working with communities to explore planning and policy strategies for "green" infrastructure: rain barrels, rain gardens, green roofs, permeable paving, and other practical and relatively inexpensive ways to contain rain where it falls. MPC is adding value to community development and fiscal management practices by working with communities large and small to integrate green infrastructure into stormwater management plans and capital budgeting processes. A bonus: When designed well, green infrastructure can transform underutilized spaces into attractive community assets.

Bringing green infrastructure into the mainstream isn't easy. Private property owners often need to be convinced that it's in their best interest to manage rainfall within their property's footprint, and funding streams like the State Revolving Loan Fund need to be adjusted to provide incentives. With a range of regional partners and funding from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, MPC has been assisting Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood and the south suburb of Blue Island with demonstration projects to showcase how green infrastructure works, how attractive and affordable it can be, and how it can complement existing grey infrastructure to maximize stormwater management benefits. Building off our long history of developing best practices in urban planning, MPC is also working with a range of partners to develop a stormwater management template for communities in northeastern Illinois—a standardized way for any municipality or other unit of government to prioritize and invest in green and gray infrastructure improvements.

Priority

Sensible water resources planning

When CMAP put out a request for proposals for its 2013 Local Technical Assistance Program, several applications came from northeastern Illinois municipalities that are realizing they need to make water supply planning a higher priority. To meet as many of these requests as possible, CMAP is tapping the assistance of MPC, with nearly a decade of experience helping communities work independently and with their neighbors to create solutions to shared water supply management concerns.

Also with CMAP, MPC is convening stakeholders across the seven-county region to advocate for policy changes needed to implement northeastern Illinois' regional water supply plan, Water 2050, and recommendations from MPC and Openlands' 2009 report, *Before the Wells Run Dry*.

MPC and CMAP also are expanding on a partnership begun in 2012 with Lake Zurich, to inform the village's implementation of a cutting-edge integrated water resources strategy. We are assisting the Northwest Water Planning Alliance—a

consortium of 80 communities, five counties and five councils of government working together on shared water supply management—to help implement a common lawn watering ordinance, devise a uniform mechanism for reporting and analyzing critical water resources management data, and explore the potential for large-scale water reuse.

MPC will recommend sensible reforms to the Ill. Dept. of Natural Resources' Lake Michigan permitting process that will improve accounting, promote cutting edge plumbing, manage discretionary outdoor water use, and provide more assistance and counsel to the more than 200 communities in our region that use lake water.

MPC also is informing the Ill. Dept. of Public Health on revisions to modernize the state's plumbing code to allow, among other things, non-drinking water that is currently wasted (e.g., rain and graywater) to be used. For instance, 30 percent of drinking water used in homes is flushed down the toilet. Modernizing the plumbing code will balance sustainability, public health standards, and infrastructure costs, while creating new options for property owners and communities to use water more efficiently.



A transportation network that serves people and the economy

Chicago's economy is intrinsically tied to our region's robust transportation network, including the backbone: a public transit system that provides more than 2 million trips a day. To double that number by 2040, MPC is pursuing regional transportation strategies and investments that connect people to jobs and destinations, serve businesses, curb pollution, and dramatically reduce the \$7.3 billion a year our region wastes due to gridlock.



Priority

Realize Chicago's vision for a Bus Rapid Transit network that improves transportation and attracts development.

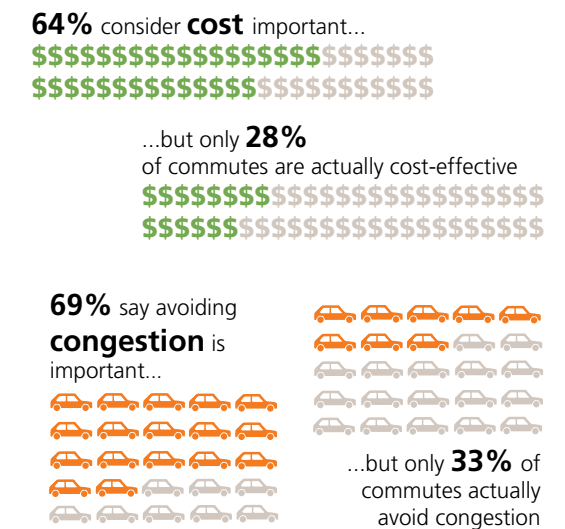
An effective transportation network makes connections—between people and the places they want and need to go, between businesses and customers, and between neighborhoods and the broader city and region. As Chicago develops a Bus Rapid Transit network, MPC is partnering with the City, transportation decisionmakers, and the private sector to shape a strategy that improves all of these connections, by contributing to a more robust public transit system and by attracting new development along planned routes and around new stations.

BRT is a cost-effective use of existing roads to provide commuters with a reliable, fast, affordable and green way to travel. With limited stops and dedicated lanes, as well as permanent, iconic stations and the ability of the bus to coordinate with traffic signals, BRT offers the appeal of rail at a fraction of the cost—for transit riders and investors.

Early opportunities to achieve "gold standard" BRT in Chicago include a Central Loop BRT route with bus-priority lanes on Washington Boulevard and Madison Street, and a route planned for Western and/or Ashland avenues. Informed by our 2011 BRT study that identified priority routes in Chicago, and the Chicago Dept. of Housing and Economic Development's (DHED) Land Use plan along Western and Ashland, MPC is conducting an economic analysis of areas with high development potential along Western and Ashland. MPC will present these findings to companies and developers to gauge—and pique—their interest, and work with DHED to explore how the value of new development sparked by BRT could be "captured" to help finance capital investment in BRT (see page 8).

Transportation demand management across the Chicago region

Commuting accounts for just 20 percent of our daily trips—but creates the majority of the region's traffic congestion. Since 2010, MPC has been leading the Commute Options pilot to enlist 15 city and suburban employers in offering incentives that encourage their employees to trade driving alone to work for walking, biking, carpooling or taking transit. A survey of more than 5,000 Chicago area employees revealed that many are not satisfied with their commutes (see graphic at right), and they would be happy to try alternatives if certain barriers were addressed. In 2013, MPC is evaluating the results of the pilot, and working with the Regional Transportation Authority and Commute Options providers to draft a business plan for a permanent Chicago-area transportation demand management strategy that brings these tools to scale.



Performance-based transportation planning in Illinois and D.C.

Whether it's a new Bus Rapid Transit route, expressway, or bike path, when a transportation investment performs well at multiple levels—reducing congestion, mitigating air pollution, connecting people to vital destinations, sparking economic development—we must learn from that success and make similar investments in the future. That's performance-based transportation investing, and MPC is supporting the Illinois Dept. of Transportation to move in this direction as it pursues strategic planning that is consistently goal-driven and coordinated with regional priorities. Through our partnership with Transportation for America, MPC is taking lessons learned in the Chicago region to the national transportation stage as the U.S. prepares to reauthorize transportation investment in 2014.

Innovative financing that unlocks regional growth

Doing more with less is a fact of life, at every level of government and across the private sector. While putting off expensive repairs or delaying new projects might provide short-term relief, in the face of overwhelming infrastructure needs and a growing population, our region simply cannot afford stopgap solutions. MPC believes the answer is not how much we spend, but how well—by aligning the private and public sectors to maximize resources, and by pursuing investments that achieve local and regional goals.



Priority

Establish value capture as a viable way to finance Chicago-area infrastructure investments.

Higher gas prices, longer delays, more potholes—that's what drivers experience year after year. In Chicagoland alone, gridlock costs an estimated \$7.3 billion a year due to wasted time and fuel, and environmental damages. Yet drivers don't necessarily relate to the fact that the nation's Highway Trust Fund and Mass Transit Accounts are shrinking in size and purchasing power. The federal motor fuel tax has not been indexed to inflation in 20 years, and Americans are driving less and making fewer trips to the pump as a result of higher fuel economy standards. These factors add up to significantly less state and federal funding to support regional transportation improvements.

It's time to dramatically rethink how we invest in our transportation system. MPC is pursuing a variety of innovative financing tools in partnership with area decisionmakers, including value capture. Well-planned transportation investments improve people's access to desirable destinations, which in turn increases land values nearby. In fact, studies of the Chicago region show a 10 to 20 percent increase in land values near transit stations. Value capture financing "captures" the increase in private land values generated by public transportation investments to repay their costs—thus connecting the benefit of an infrastructure investment with the cost of providing it.

To help Chicago-area decisionmakers identify opportunities to apply this new tool, in 2013, MPC is researching the potential for value capture to finance initial improvements, including Placemaking, to make Union Station a truly great place; and a Bus Rapid Transit route along Western or Ashland avenues, which has great potential to connect transit-isolated areas and attract new development.

Investments prioritized by regional plans

Smart metropolitan regions aren't waiting for D.C. to ride in on a white horse. They are becoming their own magnets for economic growth through proactive strategies. Metropolitan Chicago's *Plan for Economic Growth and Jobs* is a prime example. Through World Business Chicago, a broad array of civic, government and business leaders have agreed to focus on 10 strategies to ratchet up market levers that will trigger growth. The plan complements Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's (CMAP) GO TO 2040 comprehensive regional plan, which identifies high-priority regional infrastructure investments. MPC is helping advance both plans by identifying how existing structures and tools can get the job done, or when new approaches, such as a land bank, are needed to clear the path to growth. For instance, combining the bonding capability of the Illinois Finance Authority with the project management and construction aptitude of the Public Building Commission could be one way for CMAP to advance capital projects from GO TO 2040.

Parking demand management through smart economics

Circling the block for parking is annoying for drivers, bad for the environment, and costly to local businesses that miss out on sales when drivers zoom off in exasperation. Through CMAP's Local Technical Assistance program, MPC is working with the Wicker Park/Bucktown Chamber to analyze how variable priced parking—charging different rates for parking based on shifts in demand at different times or days of the week—can achieve just the right number of available parking spots. The study also will determine if variable priced parking would create additional revenue to support neighborhood sidewalk and transit improvements—a spot-on solution for drivers, businesses and the community.



Innovative financing to strengthen communities

Municipalities are struggling with ever-tightening budgets and finding it increasingly challenging to cover the cost of needed capital improvements through traditional public funding sources. With the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, MPC is assisting mayors and managers in understanding and applying emerging innovative financing options such as public-private partnerships, value capture, congestion pricing and variable priced parking to achieve much-needed local and regional investments.

Quality homes in attractive communities

A house is much more than a roof over one's head: It's a household's hub, often prescribing where a family shops, works, goes to school and visits the doctor. As communities across the region work to stabilize neighborhoods in the wake of ongoing foreclosures, MPC is working to increase options for quality homes near transportation choices and job centers, to benefit the region's residents and businesses.



Priority

Improve regional housing options for families with rent vouchers.

Housing Choice Vouchers were created to give more options to people who need housing assistance, so that they could live in communities around the region, not just in public housing developments. However, research has shown that when people with rent vouchers decide to move, they don't necessarily improve their quality of life by moving to neighborhoods with good jobs, transit options, and quality schools. Part of the challenge is that there simply are not enough quality, affordable rental homes in healthy communities. In addition, the ultimate goal of helping a family better its life often gets lost in the bureaucratic process when that family decides to move from one public housing jurisdiction to another.

MPC is helping address these related challenges through a regional voucher pilot and the Regional Housing Initiative (RHI). In partnership with eight public housing authorities in northeastern Illinois and funded by the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, MPC is spearheading this pilot to develop a more effective way to help families with rent vouchers move to "opportunity areas"—communities where poverty is not overly concentrated and that provide access to essential and high-quality services, such as good schools and transportation options. Using vouchers that are both tenant-based (stay with a family) and project-based

(stay with a property), the pilot is providing families with mobility counseling, information about new housing options, and connections to social services and community resources. The pilot will analyze how families fared in their new communities and whether counseling plus incentives, or incentives alone, more effectively promote moving to opportunity. The pilot will be evaluated so that HUD can replicate successes in other regions and inform future federal policies.

Additionally, MPC and the same regional housing authorities are partnering on RHI, through which housing authorities pool a portion of their Housing Choice Vouchers and convert them into project-based vouchers. Project-based vouchers remain with a development, rather than with a family, and therefore help finance new well-designed and well-managed mixed-income properties in attractive communities across the region. Since 2002, RHI has allocated 336 rental vouchers to 22 mixed-income and supportive housing developments to support more than 1,600 well-designed, well-managed, mixed-income homes in communities near transit and employment centers. By coordinating with the pilot, the goal is to maintain a central, regional referral list of families interested in RHI apartments, connecting more families with more quality housing opportunities.

Priority

Strengthen and document the value of Chicago-area institutions' Employer-Assisted Housing initiatives.

Illinois' foreclosure rates continue to climb year-over-year, even as the trend is waning across the nation. When homeowners are forced to abandon their homes and seek new housing arrangements, communities must stabilize neighborhoods through targeted strategies to acquire, renovate and resell or rent foreclosed homes. In the Chicago area, several institutions are helping workers secure their housing and are contributing to community redevelopment through Employer-Assisted Housing (EAH).

MPC, which has facilitated northeastern Illinois' EAH initiative since 2000, is sharpening its focus in 2013 by partnering closely with anchor employers such as the University of Chicago and Medical Center, Loyola University and Loyola's Stritch School of Medicine in Maywood. These institutions are using EAH not only to support employee homeownership and workforce stability—for instance by providing access to free counseling for



potential homeowners to lower their risk of future foreclosure—but also to strengthen local communities in the wake of foreclosures, by connecting employees who want to become homeowners with local community redevelopment initiatives creating new attractive housing. MPC is helping anchor institutions maximize the benefits of their investment in EAH, while documenting the outcomes to inspire other employers to do the same.

Our Volunteers

In 2013, MPC welcomes five new board members and six new executive advisors (*in italics*), and congratulates Joseph A. Gregoire on his appointment as board chair.

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Our Mission

Since 1934, the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) has been dedicated to shaping a more sustainable and prosperous greater Chicago region. As an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, MPC serves communities and residents by developing, promoting and implementing solutions for sound regional growth.



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