



Reinventing the Region 2014 Plan for Prosperity


Metropolitan **Planning Council**

80 Years of **Reinventing** the Region



Above: Mary Anne Enriquez. Cover: NASA/International Space Station Expedition 30 crew.

Metropolitan Council



The Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) celebrates the legacy of **Mr. John W. Baird** (1915–2013), who served on our Board of Governors for 60 years and who dedicated his career and civic engagement to the same goal that has driven MPC since our founding in 1934: creating better opportunities for everyone in our region by promoting policies and development that make Chicago more equitable, sustainable and prosperous.

Our 2014 work plan focuses on four ingredients of a successful region:

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Reinventing the region

For one week in August 2013, Chicago Union Station's Great Hall welcomed an unusual visitor: An indoor green complete with a hammock, tetherball, lawn games and picnic tables beckoned commuters and tourists alike to linger awhile in the iconic building. Thanks to MPC's Activate Union Station Placemaking contest, a place more accustomed to the sporadic hustle and bustle of commuters was suddenly a hub of community activity.

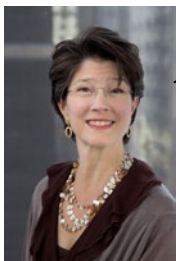
For the past five years, MPC's annual Placemaking contest has pushed residents in Chicago and across the region to reevaluate their vacant or underused spaces. Placemaking is a simple way for community members to reclaim these places with creative, heartfelt solutions like parks, gardens or art projects. In other words, Placemaking empowers people to reinvent the forgotten or abandoned corners of our neighborhoods.

A landmark since its completion in 1925, the Union Station we know today is itself a reinvention. It was built to replace an insufficient structure as Chicago grew and rail traffic expanded exponentially. Now, MPC and our allies understand that it is time—past time, really—to dramatically remake this space once again.

At MPC, we recognize that our tri-state region must constantly reinvent itself to remain not only relevant and economically viable, but also responsive to the millions of people who call it home. We will continue our 80-year tradition of working with and learning from community, government and business leaders who strive every day to make cities and regions everywhere the best that they can be.

Every region faces challenges. But how we react—how we collaborate, how we unleash innovation—determines our future. Solutions will not come easily, but they are there for our region if we can balance short-term needs with long-term sustainability, connect key assets efficiently and forge strong, lasting partnerships.

By recognizing the fundamental importance of a strong economy, quality housing and transportation, well-managed natural assets and vibrant neighborhoods, regions like ours can begin prioritizing and solving the most pressing issues of tomorrow, today. On the following pages, MPC proposes practical, progressive ideas for a stronger, more resilient region. We welcome your feedback and invite you to partner with us to put the ideas in our 2014 Plan for Prosperity to work reinventing our region.



Sincerely,

MarySue Barrett
President
Metropolitan Planning Council



Strong economy

To create good jobs and nurture a recovering economy, we must make smart investments that connect our region's assets. By strategically expanding infrastructure that meets or exceeds performance measures and generates the greatest benefits, the Chicago metropolitan area can continuously unlock its potential as an exceptional place to live and work.

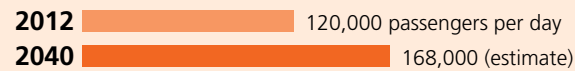


Non-traditional funding

Given the scarcity of public funds available to make even the most essential planned infrastructure investments, governments across the country have begun to tap alternative financing tools. MPC is helping Chicago-area decision makers rethink how to modernize infrastructure, deploy new financing tools and stay committed to priority investments that will attract investors and grow our economy.

For example, World Business Chicago tapped MPC to examine the redevelopment of Chicago Union Station, which sees enough daily passenger traffic that it would rank among the 10 busiest airports in the nation. MPC's analysis indicates that public-private partnerships and value capture—a method of borrowing for public investment against future increases in land value—can leverage the funds needed to transform the station into a vibrant destination, a catalyst for regional economic growth and an asset to the entire Midwest. This type of innovative financing has been successful in cities like Denver, which renovated its Union Station by leveraging future property tax growth with low-interest federal loans, generating an economic return of \$3 billion and 20,000 long-term jobs.

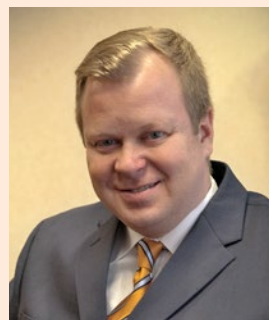
Chicago Union Station at capacity—and getting busier



Weekday arriving and departing passengers.
Source: Chicago Union Station Master Plan Study

“Amtrak has welcomed MPC’s interest in Chicago Union Station. Their Activate Union Station contest in 2013 opened lots of eyes to the station’s role as an important civic asset, and we look forward to working as partners to find the funding necessary to open up the station and accommodate our growing ridership.”

Ray Lang
Chief, State
Government Relations
Amtrak



Performance-driven spending

Aligning transportation funding policies with performance measures will ensure our region stays on track with comprehensive growth plans, including the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning’s (CMAP) GO TO 2040 and World Business Chicago’s *Plan for Economic Growth and Jobs*. Locally, MPC is promoting increased coordination between Ill. Dept. of Transportation (IDOT) funding and GO TO 2040. Federally, MPC is working with counterparts across the country to make the case to include performance measures in the next transportation reauthorization.

To better match funding for water quality and supply concerns with regional needs, MPC is engaging the Ill. Environmental Protection Agency and Ill. Finance Authority in rethinking how to make the best use of several revenue sources, including the State Revolving Loan Fund, Clean Water Initiative and Ill. Green Infrastructure Grant.

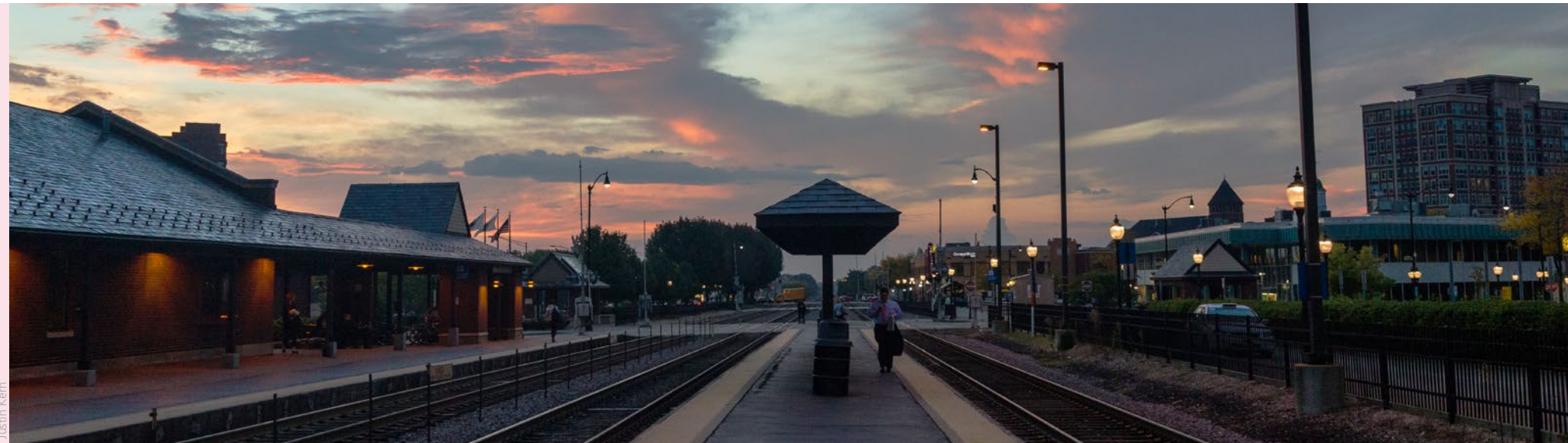
Government efficiency

With more units of local government than any other state—some 7,000—Illinois can become far more efficient and attractive to investors through thoughtful consolidation, collaboration and restructuring. Inspired by promising efforts, such as DuPage County’s Accountability, Consolidation, Transparency (ACT) initiative, and by listening to the experience of stakeholders, MPC is developing a roadmap for improved government efficiency in the Chicago region and beyond.



Quality housing and transportation

Housing and transportation are inextricably linked; where we live affects how we get around, and vice versa. By helping local leaders improve options for people today and plan ahead for the needs of tomorrow, MPC is staying true to what our founders set out to do 80 years ago: shape a more livable Chicagoland.



Connecting jobs, transit and housing

An extensive transportation network is an incredible regional asset; surrounded by residential and commercial development, it is even more effective. Transit-oriented development (TOD) fosters walkable communities, reduces traffic congestion, lowers transportation costs for families by 16 percent and increases nearby residential property values by up to 30 percent. Yet the supply of housing and retail near transit isn't keeping up with demand, and some parts of our region have none at all.

To attract investors interested in building TOD in suburban Cook County, MPC is supporting Enterprise Community Partners and IFF to activate the Southland Community Development Loan Fund and West Cook County Loan Fund. In Chicago, MPC is committed to the City's strategy to leverage public and private dollars to support walkable and mixed-income development in transit-dense areas, in particular along new bus rapid transit (BRT) corridors. Along with key partners, MPC is helping communities maximize TOD investments, proposing amendments to the recent City of Chicago TOD ordinance to further encourage equitable development near transit, including the first phase of the city's BRT network. Our interactive mapping tool allows communities and developers to visualize and plan residential and retail growth along the planned Ashland Avenue BRT corridor.

Commute options

From 2010 to 2013, MPC's Commute Options pilot worked with 16 regional employers to offer incentives to entice their employees away from driving alone and toward more sustainable commuting modes. The pilot results demonstrated both the need for a Transportation Demand Management strategy in the Chicago metropolitan area and the willingness to embrace a coordinated regional effort. In 2014, MPC is transitioning the initiative to a permanent home, so that everyone in the region can have the resources they need to make informed, sustainable transportation decisions.

Opening up housing opportunities

The Regional Housing Initiative (RHI) is a first-ever collaboration between eight public housing authorities, Illinois Housing Development Authority and MPC that pools resources to support developers building or renovating quality affordable homes near transit, jobs and good schools. Born out of RHI and in partnership with the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, MPC's three-year voucher portability pilot encourages low-income families to relocate to these types of communities through moving assistance and financial incentives. MPC is analyzing both RHI and the voucher portability pilot to inform future local, regional and federal policies on coordinated, cost-effective approaches to make attractive neighborhoods accessible to more families.



“It's very different from where I came from... I feel very comfortable and safe here. I couldn't have done it without the help of the program.”

Angela Nash
Regional Housing Initiative voucher portability pilot participant

Living near work

Every year, the Chicago region wastes more than \$7 billion due to traffic gridlock. Employer-assisted housing (EAH), whereby employers provide incentives for workers to buy or rent homes near their workplace or transit, can shorten or even eliminate car trips and improve employee retention. In 2014, MPC's EAH initiative will focus on recruiting Chicago-area anchor institutions, such as universities and hospitals, as well as employers in targeted industrial corridors—not only to benefit employers and workers, but also to help stabilize their surrounding neighborhoods.



Well-managed natural assets

With a higher frequency of more violent storms, strategic investment in smart stormwater solutions is one of our region's most pressing priorities. Meanwhile, our region's water supply infrastructure continues to age, even as repair and modernization costs climb. Chicagoland's future resiliency depends on the initiatives we launch today to manage all our water resources—from Lake Michigan to stormwater—in the most efficient, cost-effective ways.



Resilient infrastructure

From submerged cars and ruined basements to flooded expressways and contaminated waterways, stormwater takes its toll on our infrastructure, our possessions and our homes. To ease the strain on existing pipes and pumps and reduce the need for costly new investments in "grey" infrastructure, MPC is working with communities, the Ill. Environmental Protection Agency and University of Chicago to improve the effectiveness of investments in green infrastructure, such as rain barrels, rain gardens and green roofs. MPC is also partnering with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago and Chicago Wilderness to develop wet weather management planning processes that integrate with existing local comprehensive plans; revising state funding sources and legislation to better prioritize stormwater projects and infrastructure investment; and coordinating with the State of Illinois' Millennium Reserve stormwater management initiatives in the Calumet region.

"To keep Chicagoland resilient, we must all manage all of our water resources. Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago has pursued a variety of strategies for both grey and green infrastructure, from reservoirs to rain gardens, and we look forward to continuing our work with MPC as we manage this valuable asset now and for generations to come."

David St. Pierre
Executive Director
Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago



Sustainable water supplies

MPC is working with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning on multiple fronts to ensure sustainable and cost-effective management of northeastern Illinois' lake, river and groundwater supplies. Through three parallel initiatives, MPC is helping to curb waste and set our region on a track for responsible water use.

For the 75 percent of our region that relies on Lake Michigan water, there is a pressing need to repair and modernize the thousands of miles of pipes that distribute that water: Due to leaks, faulty meters and accounting errors, every week enough water is lost to fill the Willis Tower one and one third times. MPC is working with the Ill. Dept. of Natural Resources to reduce this needless waste of water and money through a more proactive, accountable permitting system. At the same time, MPC is pushing for revisions to state and local funding criteria to prioritize reinvestment, repair and efficiency.

For those communities in our region dependent on groundwater and the Fox River, the immediate need is for collaborative strategies to manage those resources at the watershed scale. MPC is assisting the Northwest Water Planning Alliance to improve regional water resources management and decision-making across its five counties and 80 municipalities.

Fundamentally, our region suffers less from lack of water than it does from poorly managed water resources. MPC is working with the Ill. Dept. of Public Health to modify the state's plumbing code to allow wider use of non-drinkable water, which would provide local water resource managers with sustainable options to overcome stormwater and water supply challenges.



Vibrant neighborhoods

Our region is a patchwork of unique communities, each with its own make-up and specific needs. What works for one community may not work in another. MPC understands how to listen to local leaders and residents and establish an insightful dialogue to arrive at tailored solutions that benefit whole communities.



Collaborative planning

The devastating ramifications of the foreclosure crisis, declining public resources and rising poverty across Chicago's suburbs require creative tools for stabilizing and improving communities. Foreclosures have left some communities with a glut of vacant properties, leading to blight and higher crime rates. Simultaneously, the demand for rental homes has increased dramatically, driving up rents.

MPC is providing technical assistance to the South Suburban and Cook County Land Banks, to help put vacant land back to productive use. MPC is also spearheading a pilot in the south suburbs to build the capacity of communities to address the rise of investor landlords who are buying and renting out single-family homes. The sharp growth in new owners—some individuals, some large real estate investors—has challenged municipalities to keep track of, inspect and ensure these rental homes are maintained properly. MPC is working with stakeholders to identify areas where communities, the county and other governmental agencies can cooperate, such as a joint system for tracking landlords and properties. MPC also is helping communities draft necessary ordinances and policies for code enforcement and launch incentives to reward responsible investors.

Through Homes for a Changing Region, MPC is expanding its work with the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and CMAP to engage clusters of suburban communities to balance their current housing stock with projected demographic changes. A community's housing needs today may differ completely from its needs 20 years from now—addressing those challenges now will prepare neighborhoods for the future.

Great places

Placemaking is a way for communities to create and program welcoming public spaces, leading to improved quality of life and economic viability by equipping local residents to enact the changes they desire. MPC promotes this approach as a tool to make metropolitan Chicago an attractive, vibrant region for residents, businesses and tourists.

Across the country, large urban train stations are basking in the glow of a rail/retail renaissance. In Chicago, the West Loop neighborhood has gained more than 48,000 new residents in the last decade, and Chicago Union Station is well situated to provide them with a place to mingle, shop and relax. MPC's 2013 Placemaking contest, "Activate Union Station," brought art installations, a picnic area and programming to the station for one week in August and sparked a regional discussion about Chicago Union Station's potential to be great again. MPC is partnering with the City, World Business Chicago and Amtrak to further develop this regional transportation hub into a destination for both residents and visitors from all over the world.



“MPC gave community stakeholders an opportunity to identify the strengths and challenges of one of Bronzeville's key corridors and transit stops on 47th Street. Quad Cities Development Corporation then created programming to enhance the strengths and tackle the challenges, which included a garden under the 'L', street performances and public art.”



Bernita Johnson-Gabriel
Executive Director
Quad Communities Development Corporation

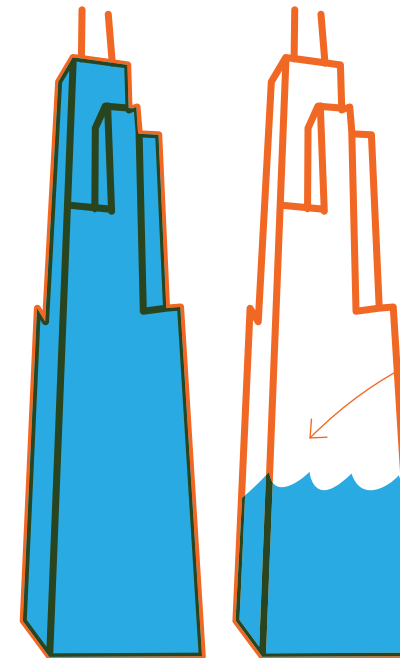
Regional impact: A look back at 2013



Strong economy

Eighteen miles of Bus Rapid Transit are in the planning stages in Chicago, including the nation's first "gold standard" route along Ashland Avenue. MPC has been a steady champion for Chicago to lead the way on BRT: In 2013, we helped sign on some 2,500 individuals and 42 businesses/organizations as BRT supporters. In a phone survey, 74 percent of Chicagoans who had heard of BRT supported bringing it here. MPC has also been working to ensure this new transportation investment complements and improves local neighborhood development: Our **interactive mapping tool** allows communities and developers to visualize and plan residential and retail growth along the planned Ashland corridor.

Learn more about MPC's transit-oriented development work on page 4 or at metroplanning.org/tod and metroplanning.org/brt.



Well-managed natural assets



MPC's 2013 report *Immeasurable Loss* reported that north-eastern Illinois **loses enough Lake Michigan water each week to fill the Willis Tower one and one-third times**. The report recommended a number of policy changes to help stem this loss, and MPC's advocacy helped generate comments from 52 communities and organizations in support of these changes to the Ill. Dept. of Natural Resources.

Learn more about MPC's water supply work on page 7 and at metroplanning.org/water.

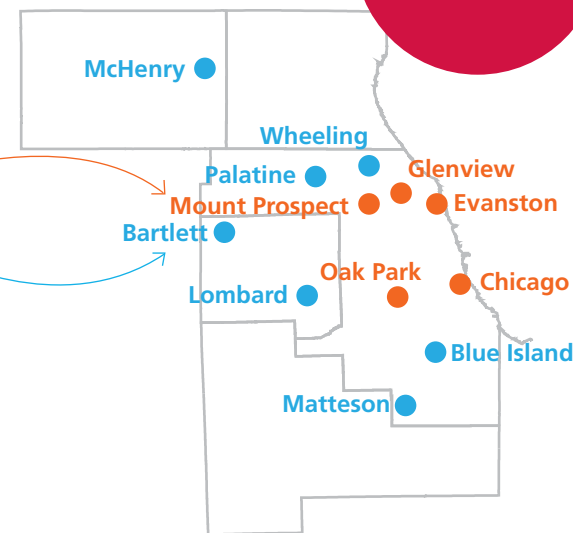
Quality housing and transportation



MPC's Regional Housing Initiative (RHI) combines the resources of eight public housing authorities and the Illinois Housing Development Authority to support developers building or renovating affordable homes near transit, good schools and quality neighborhoods. In 2013, RHI celebrated the opening of **183 mixed-income apartments** in five high-opportunity suburban locations. In addition, **seven multi-family residential developments** were approved for tax credit financing.

RHI also provides counseling and assistance to help families with vouchers move to quality communities, bridging the gap between formerly disparate housing authorities. Through 2013, RHI has **offered assistance to 1,400 families**.

Learn more about MPC's Regional Housing Initiative on page 5 and at metroplanning.org/rhi.



Vibrant neighborhoods

The first step in improving any community is to gather input from the community itself. As part of MPC's Placemaking initiative, in 2013 we partnered with the City of Blue Island to **conduct "place audits" at four sites along Blue Island's underutilized waterfront** on the Calumet River and adjacent channel. Attendees—a diverse cross-section of the community's residents, business owners and municipal staff—identified what features were lacking or what was possible at each site. Comment cards (available in English and Spanish) were collected and reviewed, and the resulting vision was presented at a community meeting in early 2014.

Learn more about MPC's Placemaking work on page 9 and at metroplanning.org/placemaking, or about this particular initiative at blueisland.org/waterfront.



Our volunteers

Throughout our work, MPC draws on the efforts of an array of dedicated volunteers. In 2014, we welcome 11 new board members and six new executive advisors (*in italics*).

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Giant Ginkgo

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.



Metropolitan**Planning**Council

80 Years of **Reinventing** the Region

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