

DPD North Branch Testimony

5.18.17

Good morning. My name is MarySue Barrett and I'm the President of the independent Metropolitan Planning Council. I'm pleased to support the Department of Planning and Development's North Branch Industrial Corridor Framework Plan.

About MPC

Since 1934, MPC has been dedicated to shaping a more equitable, sustainable and prosperous Chicago region for everyone. We believe that all of our region's assets must work together so that we can compete in the global economy, attract business and residents, and continue to be a great place to live, work and raise families.

Support of the Framework Plan

MPC applauds DPD for creating a plan and process that is sensitive to all the interests, businesses and users along the North Branch of the Chicago River and within the North Branch Industrial Corridor. The Framework Plan builds off of the important role the Chicago River plays in our city, acknowledges the

importance of manufacturing to our economy while demonstrating an eye toward the future, and leverages the energy and growth in this neighborhood to strengthen economic opportunity in other areas of the city.

As we lend our support to the Framework plan, I'd like to emphasize three areas where DPD's progress should be highlighted and extended further:

ONE: We MUST protect good paying jobs and ensure manufacturing continues to play a critical role in Chicago's economy. TWO: We MUST harness the energy and growth of every major investment to spur inclusive growth in low-income neighborhoods. THREE: We MUST protect our river frontage and support the creation of parks and other open spaces that enhance this unique natural asset.

PMDs

Planned Manufacturing Districts—or PMDs—protect one of our city's greatest economic strengths—manufacturing. In fact, as other Midwest cities lost their manufacturing jobs, Chicago's PMDs have helped stem the outflow of good paying jobs and keep industry within city borders. As a result, Chicago boasts the nation's second largest number of manufacturing jobs and the region maintains the third largest manufacturing economy, according to World

Business Chicago and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. This is a strength we should build off to remain competitive.

At the same time, DPD recognizes that the nature of our economy is changing and our land use policies must also evolve. This Framework Plan eliminates or significantly modifies the PMDs to make way for new development opportunities. This shift aligns with the changing needs of the community, but should be accompanied by a strong commitment to quality jobs—in ALL industrial corridors, including the North Branch.

We encourage the City to clearly articulate in which corridors elsewhere in the city the PMD tool will continue to help guide development and in which corridors its boundaries and uses may be reexamined. By identifying which Industrial Corridors are likely to continue to have supportive land use policies, manufacturers will have the certainty they need to plan for future growth and modernization.

Leverage Investment/Fee Structure

MPC fully supports the City's plans to leverage private investment at this location to support critical infrastructure upgrades within the community as well as to spark industrial development and supportive investments in places of need on the city's south and west sides. The City of Chicago has recently

become a national leader on linked development through its Neighborhood Opportunity Bonus, which has increased funding for the commercial and cultural needs in low-income neighborhoods. We strongly encourage the City to deepen its commitment to its equity goals in partnership with landowners. We encourage the City to release more details on the amount of the fees to be assessed. This information is critical for conducting cost-benefit and fiscal impact analysis of the proposals outlined in this Framework plan, to ensure that we harness and don't dampen the growth occurring in this corridor to strengthen industrial areas in other corridors across the city.

Chicago River Amenities

Finally, MPC strongly supports DPD's inclusion of a wetlands park and comprehensive riverfront trail that will utilize river frontage for the unique kinds of open space and recreation that everyone can take advantage of and enjoy.

In partnership with the Emanuel Administration, MPC led the initiative to create the city's first-ever unifying and forward-looking vision for all three of Chicago's rivers. During that Great Rivers Chicago process, we talked to more than 6,000 people who echoed what is presented here in the Framework

Plan—Chicagoans need more riverfront access and parks that emphasize and celebrate the area’s green space and natural life.

While we fully appreciate the strong community desire for recreational facilities like ball parks, those are best addressed away from the river, aided by private funds through the planned development process.

Summary

The North Branch Framework Plan marks both an enormous shift as well as a tremendous opportunity. Where once more than 100,000 tons of steel were processed a year, the North Branch Industrial Corridor will be reimagined into co-existing businesses, offices, homes, shops, and amenities. We support DPD’s plan and remain confident that while change in the North Branch occurs, the City of Chicago can leverage one of the biggest development opportunities to protect industry and jobs, and support economic growth in neighborhoods of need.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.